

Mirai No Yakusoku

by ardith

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Summary: After the Kyoto Saga, the Kenshin-gumi suffer a tragic loss. But even in the darkest hour, there is hope. WARNING: Contains major character death, blood, violence... Oh and it was started in 1998!
Twists & Turns! COMPLETE! Finally!

1. losses

****Mirai No Yakusoku****

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Originally written in 6/98. Revisions made: 11/20/98.

Updated with new revisions: 1/24/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth
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> Japanese Notes:
 Chikkusho: Shit

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>Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 1 - Losses

The cold steel cut through her like fire. The pain was piercing. _No. _Kami-sama_, this could not be happening. Not now!_ Not when her life was so good. But the pain was real. Everything was going cold. She fought as the darkness ate away at the edges of her vision._ No. . . no. . . no. . . NO!_

"No one can have you. No one can have you... You belong to me. You've always belonged to me," Yuuta whispered the words to her. His eyes were glazed over, mad.

_It _had _to come to this. You made me do this. Why didn't you love me?_ He stared in facination at the shock on his beloved's face. Yuuta made sure he struck true. He struck so she would suffer, so she would pay for ignoring him, for rejecting his pure love.

She had seen him around, avoided him. To her, he was nothing. Now she knew. Now she was his. He had loved her for so long. She was so beautiful. She was so kind. He had never had the courage to speak to her, but he watched her. Yuuta would come by to speak with her father as a boy and stare at her, even back then, watch her with hungry eyes. She was everything to him. But she never noticed. Not once. If she did, she hid her reaction.

She had screamed, his beautiful angel, as the katana cut deeply into her flesh. He felt his eyes tear at the sound, at the agony he was inflicting on the one person that was most important to him. He felt her pain as he pushed the sword through her flesh. This life would be over soon. But afterwards, they would be together. For that he rejoiced. No one else would have her now. Not any of those men who lived with her and laughed with her. No one. She was his forever! He wiped away the crimson droplets that sprinkled on to her face. There, she was as he always remembered her. _ Perfect. You are so perfect. And you belong to me. _

* * *

>"No! Kaoru-dono! KAORU!" Kenshin's voice was harsh, frantic. He ran towards Kaoru's prone form near the riverbank. She had gone back after a package she had left by the banks. Her screams had reached the group just as they started toward home.

Before heading back to the dojo, they decided to stopped by the river banks to relax. They had been starting back when Kaoru remembered something. She rushed back to fetch a bag she had left there. She told them to start back and she would catch up. Kenshin's heart sank as he took in the scene before him. Kaoru lay crumpled, her kimono stained with blood. A man knelt beside her, his eyes bludging with madness.

"You are too late! She's mine now! I love her like none of you ever have," he raged. "She will be with me forever. I'm taking her to the next life. It's too late!" Covered with her blood, he raised his katana again, cutting into her with fierce strength. The man was mad. The bastard wanted to kill Kaoru because he_ loved _her?

Kenshin ran towards her, towards the man beside her, but it was too late. Her attacker plunged the stained katana into his own heart. The pain was over quickly for him, but he cut Kaoru so that she would suffer. She was bleeding to death. Kenshin could only look on in horror. To his experienced eye, he knew that the wound was too gross

to fix. She was dying before their eyes.

"Kenshin..." Her voice was already weak. _Death. This was death._ She wanted to scream at her loss. She wanted to live. But... but she already knew that it was not going to happen.

"Kaoru!" Megumi rushed toward her side, but she already saw that it would do no good. The wounds were too deep. He had cut too many vital organs. So much blood. _Gods_. She bent forward, trying to stop some of the bleeding, but it was hopeless. Megumi's hands shook as she tried to staunch the flow, knowing nothing she could do would help. "Kaoru..." she whispered. "Please, no."

Kenshin knelt beside her. Kaoru stared at his face, imprinting it to her final memory. His eyes. She loved his eyes. They always let her see into his soul. Since the beginning, she could see the truth in those eyes. They were burning now. _Tears._ He was crying for her. She loved him, so much. So much. She never wanted to see him sad...

"Kenshin... Yuuta... H-He said he loved me. He said that n-no one could have me, if he couldn't. He's mad. I-I never noticed...I just... I-"

"Ka-Kaoru..." Kenshin's voice cracked. "Shhh. Don't talk. It's going to be okay," he lied. His hands shook as he pushed her hair from her face. Her beautiful eyes were full of pain. And of love.

"Kenshin, I'm getting cold." She wanted to take back the words as she saw the panic on his face grow. She didn't want him to worry about her. She felt a strange calmness take hold. It was going to be okay now.

Kenshin knew it was too late. She wasn't going to make it. He buried his face in her loosened hair. She smelled of jasmine. Jasmine and the familiar sharp, metallic tinge of blood. His heart ached and broke as he watched her struggle to breath, to talk. She was slipping out of his life. Dammit, she didn't deserve this. She...

"I love you..." he whispered into her hair. He lifted his face and kissed her lips gently. For her belief in him. For the family they had made together from so many different people. _ For everything._

"Kenshin, I love you, too. So much... I love you,_ minna_." It was so hard to talk. She struggled to move her lips. She had so little time to say what she needed to. They needed to know how much... how much she loved them. Needed them. Loved them. "Please. T-Take care of each other. You... need each other," she whispered as the darkness closed in on her. Her eyes felt so heavy. She had to close them. She couldn't feel anything anymore. The pain, sharp and burning a few moments before, now began to fade. She struggled to say all she could before... She needed to let them know.

"Y-Yahiko, take over the school. I taught you... I taught you the succession technique... I'm s-sorry... I'm so sorry. I love you." She couldn't feel the tears that seeped from her eyes. She couldn't feel the tears that fell from Kenshin's. She welcomed the dark now. The pain was ending, fading away totally.

"Forever... Kenshin." She whispered. "I will wait for you. Kenshin... Don't worry so much... Please..." she whispered softly, her voice faint. Kaoru closed her eyes.

"NOOOO!" Kenshin felt his soul rip apart as her eyes closed forever. Everything had been coming together. There was peace. With her. He had thought... He had thought that they would be together. He could be with her. He loved her so much.

He pulled her body closer, as if trying to will his life into her. Too late... Too late. He looked up at his companions, as if trying to find an answer. There were none.

Yahiko staggered forward to kneel by her, tears streaming down his face. He touched her cheek, wiping the tears away from her face. It was still warm, but the chill of death was creeping in. "Kaoru! _ Chikkusho! Chikkusho! _ This can't be happening." Yahiko loved her. Kaoru was the sister that he never had. The mother that he had lost... This could not be happening. It was a nightmare. All of it.

2. lingering thoughts

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WARINING - KYOTO Spoilers! If you don't know the ending, um... I think I reveiled that one in this! It is not all that happy to begin with!

Yuukiko Brave Child

> Kakushin CoreHeart

> Japanese:
 Nandemonai!: It's nothing!

> Ecchi: Perverted

> Iku de gozaruyo. : Let's go. Polite style.

Originally written in 6/98.

> Revisions made: 1120/98

> Updated with new revisions: 124/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> Update with new edits: 0311/02

> UPDATED AGAIN: 0316/2005

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><div class="center"> Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 2 - Lingering Thoughts

Kenshin wanted to die. But he didn't. He couldn't. Yahiko needed him.

They all needed him. As much as he wanted to tell them to leave him alone, he couldn't. He was hurting, but they were hurting just as much. To retreat into himself would be unfair to them. Kaoru had been the light that warmed them all. Kenshin needed to keep everything together, like Kaoru had asked. They needed to take care of each other.

The trek back to the dojo carrying his precious load had been torture. Each step stabbed the knowledge that he had been too late deeper and deeper into his heart. _ If only..._

"Kaoru ..." He couldn't do anything. He had been too late. Too late. He couldn't protect her. He did not know there had been danger. _If I had known, I would have never left you. Never._ He had wasted their time together questioning himself, doubting his right to be happy.

The Buddhist ceremony of cremation was tomorrow. He didn't know if he could go through another one again. Losing Tomoe had been bad enough, but that pain had faded. Kaoru had been so young. She hadn't even begun to experience life. He should have told her before, told her everything. He had wasted all of this time with her stepping around the truth, hiding the fact that he loved her so much.

He had rationalized that Kaoru was too young for him. Lifetimes too young. She was good, innocent. He hid behind goofy faces, trying to bury his feelings for her behind those masks. He thought that one day she would find someone closer to her age, closer to her experience. Of course, he didn't know what he would do when that happened. Maybe he had thought he would be dead before then by the hand of some old enemy. _If not, I would have just stepped aside if she found someone else. I would have tried to... to make her happy._

But when he had to go to Kyoto to fight Shishio, he couldn't leave without saying good-bye to her. It broke his heart then to leave and keep on walking while he heard her sobs. Those sounds echoed through his heart every step he took to Kyoto.

It was Megumi's sobs that he could hear now, though she had tried to control them. Kaoru was a good friend to her. Watching her die, not being able to help... Kenshin could see the toll all of this had taken on their small family. Nothing could ever be the same. Time seemed to have stopped. _Kaoru..._

* * *

>Tokyo 1999

"Geesh, Yuukiko! You look totally gross!" Aya grinned at her best friend. She looked exhausted. Again. "So... what's been keeping you up? I'm not going to ask who, 'cuz you have no social life. Unless...?"

"Aya. You have been my best friend for more years than I care to remember. I have loads of blackmail material at my disposal. Can you say, 'I LOVE VANILLA ICE?' Remember that I have pictures. Anyway, I'm really not in the mood to discuss any of this. I have a midterm!" As it was, Yuukiko already knew what she looked like. She saw her face this morning. It was not a cute and preppy good morning face. _Nope. Whatever stared back at her this morning definitely was not

cuteness._

"Yuuki-chan! What's wrong? You've been so spaced out lately." Aya's face suddenly looked serious. Dark circles bruised the skin below her eyes. Yuukiko had a classic prettiness, but lately she seemed more than a little frazzled.

"_Nandemonai!_ Don't worry about it!" She looked down at her wrist watch and gasped. "Aya, I have to go to class! Don't worry about me. I'm just tired, that's all... Weird dreams."

"Hehe. _Weird dreams_, eh?" Aya grinned wickedly.

"Aya..." Yuukiko could only shake her head at her.

"Hai?"

"You're _ecchi!_" She lightly tapped Aya on the forehead with her finger. "You should get your mind out of the gutter. Anyway, I gotta run. _Ja ne!_"

"_JA NE!_"

As Yuukiko hurried to her class, she couldn't help but remembering the images from the night before.

The weirdest dreams...

* * *

><div>

Tokyo 1879

It was hard to face the past, but it was time for it.

Kenshin sat, his back against the wall and his sword in hand, as if waiting for an attack even while in repose.

She was gone. It was all over now. He felt a wrenching pain in his heart whenever he thought of her. She was his friend. She was more. She had touched something in him that no one else had in a long time. She took him in even before she knew his past. After she found out...she still accepted him.

He loved her.

Closing his eyes again, he saw her face, smiling. Her lips moving to say his name the way that only she could.

"Kenshin. . . ."

"Yahiko? What is it?" he asked, opening his eyes at his voice. Yahiko had grown taller, he noticed. Soon he would be taller than Tsubame. So much time had passed since their small family first got together. Was it a year? Two? How could time pass so quickly?

"Megumi is done with the preparations for...", Yahiko struggled with the words. They stuck in his dry throat. Kaoru had always been more than his teacher. They fought and laughed like brother and sister.

But he knew that he had to be strong. He just wished Kenshin would do something more than sit and stare into space. Maybe Kenshin, too, felt that crying was for later, when he was alone with his memories.

"_Hai. Iku de gozaruyo. _" Kenshin got up slowly.

Maybe if I go really slow, I can wake up from this nightmare or control it or something... This can't be real. None of this is real! I'll wake up and Kaoru won't be... gone He fought for some sort of balance. There were people who needed him. But the one he needed... she was gone forever.

Moonlight becomes her, Kenshin thought as he looked over at Kaoru as she moved towards him in quick precise steps, the heels of her sandals clicking impatiently against the ground. Nothing ever seemed to flounder her when she was in this kind of mood.

Telling the story of his past had been hard. These people were his family and he never wanted them to know Battousai. Not them. He didn't want them exposed to his raw, ugly past. To let them see all of what he was, what he had been. Especially not Kaoru. He had never wanted her to know the ugly truth about himself.

She suddenly turned to face him fully. "Kenshin. Are you going to be okay?" she asked, slowly walking towards him. She looked so young and fresh - innocent, even after hearing the whole bloody tale of his youth. She just took everything in without judging, as she always did.

"Yeah." He closed his eyes, as if trying to block her from his sight. She reached him and lifted her hand to touch his cheek - his scarred face - softly.

"Kenshin, everything that happened... You were strong, Kenshin. You tried and did all you could. Try to let it go... None of us care about the past." His heart ached for the girl who died by his hand. She had been no older than Kaoru...

He could feel her near him, her breath against his cheek. She was so alive and real and good. He grabbed her hand and held it against him for a second. It felt warm. Her palms were callused from wielding bokken since childhood. These were not the soft hands of a lady, but the toughened hands of a warrior.

"Kaoru-dono, I..." She suddenly pressed her lips against his, kissing him softly. It was only for a second, their breath mingling for that bit of time. She slowly pulled back from him, staring up at him in the soft glow of the moon.

"Love is a wonderful thing, Kenshin. It is the greatest power in the world. Everyone here, we all love you. Remember that."

Kaoru turned and walked back into the dojo. Kenshin stared after her retreating form, his lips still warm from hers.

"Kaoru..."

Memories of that first kiss haunted him. Her love made him a better man. Kenshin had spent the first ten years of the Meiji looking to

atone for his sins. He looked for solace in helping others. When he met Kaoru, he felt something that he had not felt for anyone since Tomoe had broken through to his bloodied soul. In Kaoru's eyes, he saw hope and joy in life.

Kamiya Kaoru had been running the Kamiya Dojo since her father's death the year before. A young girl, all on her own. She had to be strong and smart to pull such a feat off when the world was changing so radically around her. There were always those who looked for victims to take advantage of. But she held on to her family's dojo and school with such a fierceness.

Kaoru was not Tomoe. She was different, more self-assured and strong, yet not... Kenshin stayed because he was intrigued with her at first. This girl looked at the world with totally different eyes. Then, with Sano, Megumi and Yahiko, they all became a family. Kenshin always thought that that was what Kaoru had really wanted in the beginning when she had asked him to stay. She wanted someone to help chase away the loneliness.

She was funny and sweet and couldn't cook rice without burning it. She did something to him inside him from the moment he first met her and she accused him of being the Battousai with her beautiful eyes filled with determination. She had never been afraid of him.

When he had left for Kyoto, he couldn't go without telling her. He loved them all, but he couldn't walk into the night without telling her that he was going, no matter how hard it was to say good-bye forever. As he walked into the night, he could hear the soft echoes of her stifled sobs. It took all his will to not turn around and go to her, to tell her he loved her, but he had to do this for the good of the country. For her future.

He walked away, thinking it would be the last time he would be able to see her. Her face, her voice became a talisman to him during his journey. When he found out that she and Yahiko had followed him up, he was torn between the joy he felt being able to see her, seeing them again and anger at their stupidity, for putting themselves in such danger.

When the fight was over, all he wanted to do was live with all of them in peace. But, as usual, life had a way of turning on you.

"Kenshin, I love you, too. So much... "

"Kaoru... I love you, too." He stood up and walked on.

3. memories I

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> Japanese Names:
 Yuukiko Brave Child

> Kakushin CoreHeart

> Japanese Notes:
 _Busu: _ Hag

> Chikkusho:Shit. Crap.

> Nandemonai: Never mind; It doesn't matter.

> Minna:Everyone, everybody.

> Hajimemashite: How do you do?

> Yoroshiku : Nice to meet you.

> Tako: Dork. Lit. Octopus.

> Jou-chan: "Miss." Sanosuke always calls Kaoru this

> Warning: It's not all that happy to begin with! Originally written in 798.

> Revisions made: 1120/98.

> Update - new edits: 311/02

> Updated with new revisions: 124/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> UPDATE AGAIN: 0316/2005

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><div class="center">Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 3 - Memories
I

"Damn it! You didn't teach me everything that I needed to know! _Busu!_" Yahiko yelled at the dojo walls. He swiftly moved, as if fighting an unseen opponent. His movements were controlled, precise. He woke up that morning needing to do this. The practice floor was their domain. Kaoru's and his. They spent hours together here. Teacher and student.

For the first time in weeks, he went into practice. He had not wanted to since she was gone. He hardly felt like doing anything since she...

Swinging his bokken about, he numerated the reasons he raged at Kaoru for dying. The reasons he was angry at her for leaving them alone. After weeks of mourning, his grief had given way to the pain and rage he felt him flared. _Why do the most important people in my life keep leaving me? Kaoru, _damn you_! Why did you leave me? Why?_

Of course, he knew that it wasn't her fault. Kaoru definitely did not want to die. Especially not like that. _Especially not in front of us, not in front of Kenshin..._ Damn that man. Tanaka Yuuta was insane. How could he do that? The image of Kaoru's broken body was etched in Yahikio's mind. He struck out harder. Tanaka Yuuta. He wished he could make him pay.

_Good thing you killed yourself. I could kill you now! _He had never felt like this, like he could actually take someone's life. But the hate was flowing through him.

"_Chikkusho!_" Yahiko took a deep breath and wiped the dampness from

his face. Tears and sweat. He shuddered with feeling. _It's not fair_.

"Yahiko-kun...", a soft voice called from behind him. He stopped mid-strike.

"Tsu-Tsubame." He turned around to face her voice. He wondered if he frightened her with his rantings, but saw that she just looked concerned..

She entered the practice area silently, sliding the doors behind her. She had been staying with them, helping with the daily chores around the dojo. Tsubame had been trying to cope with what happened herself. But this was the first time that she had heard Yahiko strike out about what happened. The hands holding the wood bokken shook with anger. _With Kaoru-san?_

No. She knew that it was more than that. Pain and rage sparked in his eyes. That man who killed Kaoru deserved to go into the worst hell created for what he did. He took away Kaoru. Yahiko needed her. Tsubame knew Yahiko. He was angry because he thought she abandoned him. Even though Kaoru-san did not want to, she was gone and Yahiko lost someone who stood as a rock for him. Tsubame knew how that felt. She understood him. _Yahiko..._

Kaoru had been terrific. She was strong and kind. Tsubame wanted to be like her, to be courageous, strong and sweet. Kaoru hadn't cared about what the world thought of a young woman living on her own. She hadn't been afraid to live the way she wanted. She hadn't been afraid of living. In Japan, it was so easy to give in, let some one take care of you. She had overheard Tae comment that Kaoru could have just married and given teaching up, but she wanted to be free, to make her own decisions. And Kaoru did just that.

Yahiko. Kenshin. They all were in a sort of limbo now. Kaoru wouldn't have wanted that. Tsubame was determined to try to help, to try to work through all the grief. This group of very different people had made a family together, finding each other to fight off solitude. She didn't want any of them to lose that. There had be to a way.

"Yahiko-kun. I was wondering..."

"Huh? What is it?"

"Could you teach me the Kamiya Kasshin-Ryu? I want.." She took a breath for courage. "I want to be stronger. I want to be..."

_I want to be like Kaoru. I want to be stronger, braver. _For Kaoru. No, _not_ for Kaoru, for _**myself **_.

"Teach me..."

* * *

>Tokyo 1999

Kakushin was going to be late to class. It was his first day and he was going to be late!

_These damn dreams! _

He hadn't been getting enough sleep because of them. To top it all off, it was his first day at a new school.

So much for making a good impression.

He had had similar dreams for a long time, but lately, they had been coming in greater and greater frequency. The name "Kaoru" remained in his mind every time he woke up. The dreams were strange. Vague about some aspects, yet detailed in others. It frustrated him that he didn't remember much. Every morning, he woke with the strangest feeling. He pushed his bangs away from his face as he dashed to his class. No one was in the hallway anymore. That was not a good sign. Damn! _ He finally stopped in front of the door. The teacher opened the door.

"_Gomenasai_, Sensei! I..."

"_Nandemonai_. Class just started. Please go to the front and introduce yourself." He turned to his class. "_Minna_, we have a new student."

"_Hajimemashite. Boku wa _Myoujin Kakushin_ desu! _ _Yoroshiku._ "

* * *

>Tokyo 1879

Megumi stood in the doorway leading to the courtyard of the Kamiya Dojo. She sighed to herself as she watched Kenshin and Sanosuke. They sat together in silence. Both of them contemplating... something in the silence. In a strange way, the dojo had had a cocooning effect on their lives. That safe world had been shattered that horrible afternoon.

Kaoru.

Megumi ached when she thought of her. She had been too young to die.

Though they were, by an outsider's point of view, rivals for Kenshin's attention, she cared for the girl a lot. Kaoru had been alone in the world, but she survived, thrived. Megumi acknowledged to herself that they were very much alike. She had been like a little sister. Megumi knew that Kaoru wouldn't want this silence, this grieving, to go on. This atmosphere of quiet grief was definitely not her style. Kaoru had been so full of life.

Megumi sighed to herself. Kenshin would never be hers. She accepted that long ago. That had been decided that day he left for Kyoto. He loved Kaoru. She was the only one that he said good-bye to that night he left for Kyoto. Kaoru was the most important to him out of all of them. Megumi had begun to get over that fact.

Now... now, she would never make an attempt at him at all. Kaoru would be the ghost in the middle of that kind of relationship. Megumi didn't want to deal with that. And Kenshin... Kenshin probably didn't think of her like that anyway. Besides, she thought, there was someone else she cared about...

"Ken-san, Sanosuke...", she whispered, looking away from the pair. It was too much. It was hard to be at the dojo missing her laughter, her arguing. Her smile. But..._ We need each other..._

"Whatcha doing, lurking in the doorway like that?"

"Eh?" She jumped back at the rough voice.
"Sanosuke!"

"Yeah?"

"_Tako! _" She pushed at him, but he didn't move or even grunt, so it was not very satisfying. "DON'T SNEAK UP ON ME!"

"You were just standing there. I didn't sneak up on you. You just didn't notice me." He shrugged, giving her his "it's-not-my-fault" face. "I can't help it if you don't pay attention..." he muttered.

Megumi looked back to where Kenshin and Sanosuke were sitting before. Kenshin was gone. Sano followed her gaze.

"He went to check on Yahiko. Something about him being too quiet for being at practice. Yahiko was making a lot of noise before, but it got all quiet all of a sudden..."

"Sanosuke. Is he okay?" she asked, entering the courtyard. Sanosuke walked beside her, his hands folded behind his head.

"Maybe. Probably not. He'll get better. Are you?" Megumi felt his gaze on her. Sanosuke was so young, but he had seen so much in his life. Megumi knew that he thought of her as family, someone to protect. Someone to worry about.

"Better. I'm better. But it's going to take a long time." Megumi pushed back her hair. She still felt guilty, even though she couldn't have saved Kaoru. If she had gotten there before... She was a doctor, but there was nothing she could have done to stop Kaoru from dying. Those wounds... The pain she must have felt.

And I couldn't stop it. It was over before I could even attempt to help.

All four of them were there that day. Watching Kenshin and Kaoru say good-bye was permanently imprinted on her. Their bittersweet love. After she passed on, the look in Kenshin's eyes was one of pure torment and grief. All of them had lost something when Kaoru died. She was ripped out of their lives and she took a piece of them to the next world. _Why did it have to happen? _

Sanosuke looked at her, his head cocked to the side, as if asking if she was telling the truth about her feelings. He probably caught the glimmer in her eyes at that moment. Suddenly he was next to her, hugging her hard. The feel of Sanosuke's arms about her comforted her like nothing else.

"What are we going to do?" She asked against his chest. That was the question that Megumi had been wondering about for the last few weeks.

"Go on... Kaoru wanted us to take care of each other," he whispered, his dark voice serious.

It was amazing, but for the past few weeks, Sanosuke had become a rock, comforting and pushing for everyone to express themselves, teasing them to laugh when they needed it, to cry. But then, he had been witness to the death of his Sagara-taichou. Like many a child growing up in war, Sanosuke knew the pain of losing someone he loved. He took that experience and made himself stronger for it. He knew what was going on in their hearts, the pain and the grief. He knew what to do to ease it.

"Kenshin isn't talking. He has to let it out soon. At least Yahiko has been acting out. I-I hear him crying sometimes." It had pained her heart to hear his wrenching sobs in the darkness of the night. "He's a strong boy. I think he will be okay. But Kenshin..."

"Yeah. Kenshin has a haunted look in his eyes everyday. Jou-chan wouldn't have wanted that for him."

"We are going to get through this, aren't we?"

"Yeah. Like Jou-chan said. We take care of each other. We have to be strong." He hugged her hard again. Megumi let him hold her for a long time.

4. memories II

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 4 - Memories II

> **Mirai No Yakusoku**

>

>

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> Notes:
The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. All the characters I create belong to me.

>Yuukiko= Brave Child
Kakushin= Core/Heart

>Japanese Notes:
_Minna:: _ Everyone, everybody.

> Warning: It is not all that happy to begin with!! ^_^

Originally written in 7/98. Revisions made: 11/20/98.

> Updated with new revsions: 124/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> Yoko-chan (ardith@hanabatake.com)
 <http://www.hanabatake.com>

>

>

> **Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 4 - Memories II**

>

>> Kenshin turned around and quietly started towards the main part of the dojo as soon as he caught sight of Megumi and Sanosuke in each other's arms. Not that stealth mattered, the pair were totally engrossed with each other.

>>

>> _Sano and Megumi...._

>>
>> He smiled at that. Megumi deserved to find happiness. Though they seemed mismatched, they sparked off each other like fireworks. The arguing, he had reasoned long ago, was just a cover, a way for them to deny the attraction. Of course, he never confronted Sano with that fact. Sano just would have pointed out that Megumi had been pursuing him since the beginning.

>>
>> Whatever Megumi felt for him, Kenshin blithely ignored. He didn't want to hurt her if she was serious, but he half thought that she did it to tease Kaoru. Kaoru's reactions were, in a word, extreme.

>>
>> Sano had been watching him carefully these past weeks. Kenshin really didn't blame him. If Sano and the others weren't around, he really didn't know what would have happened. What he would have done.... Those first days, it was touch and go. It was hard for him to take that Kaoru was gone. It was hard for him to accept that he couldn't have saved her. _If I had been just stayed with her.... If I had been faster.... If I had known...._

>>
>> _"I love you, too. So much.... I love you, _ minna. _ Take care of each other."_

>>
>> Kaoru....

>>
>> Kenshin had found happiness with her. And he had appreciated it when he had it. He only wished he had been more open with her about his feelings. He hoped she knew just how much he loved her. After losing Tomoe, he had learned that losing someone you love hurt more than any battle wound. Kaoru taught him that it was still important to feel it. Love made him human, kept him sane.

>>
>> For 10 years, he didn't let anyone that close to him again. Not until a slip of a girl confronted him in the streets of Tokyo. He loved her then, for her courage and spirit. He had no choice in the matter, helpless against it. It was a different kind of love than the one he felt for Tomoe, but it was deep. _It felt right._

>>
>> It was Kaoru's words that kept him from going over the edge, her final request. Grief had burned at him, ate at him, but when he looked up and saw Megumi and Yahiko, tears streaming down their faces, he fought for control. He had been helpless. Fate seemed to conspire against him each time he found someone he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. _Maybe it's divine punishment..._

>>
>> He shook off those dark thoughts. If he kept thinking that way, he might spiral even deeper into depression. _Just focus on everyone else. You aren't the only one suffering._

>>
>> Then he stepped up to the doors that led into the interior of the dojo's practice room. He could hear the muffled voices of Yahiko and Tsubame. Kenshin's eyebrows rose at the words coming from the normally timid Tsubame's mouth.

>>
>> "Yahiko! Listen to me. I need this. Don't be so **DAMN STUBBORN**!"

>>
>> "Tsubame. I can't teach you. I'm not a master! You don't understand! I'm still learning my-"

>>

>> "Oh, SHUT UP!"
>>
>> Kenshin opened the doors just a bit to peek. Just in case....
>>
>> Tears were streaming down Tsubame's face. Her eyes looked fierce as she faced off with Yahiko. Yahiko looked a bit surprised and anxious. Tsubame was definitely not acting like herself. She suddenly looked mad enough to actually hit Yahiko.
>>
>> "Yahiko." Her voice trembled as she spoke. "Of all people, you should know how it is to feel like you're powerless, without any control of your life. Kenshin and Kaoru helped you, gave you the power to break free from the nightmare you were living." Yahiko reached over to wipe the tears away from her face. She held it to her cheek.
>>
>> "Tsubame-chan...."
>>
>> "I need this. Kaoru-san was.... I keep thinking about her life. She lived the way she had wanted. No one else told her what to do or how to live. She was happy. Yahiko, I want to be able to choose, the way that she did."
>>
>> Yahiko stared at her. She wanted to be stronger. She wanted to be able to live as she wanted. Yahiko had no idea that she had felt like that. Yahiko remembered the first time they had met. Tsubame had been afraid and he fought to save her. Now she wanted to be able to fight for herself.
>>
>> "I-I think I understand." _Maybe we both need this..._
>>
>> "Good. Yahiko. Help me be stronger. I-" The door opened with a thud and a redheaded eavesdropper rolled onto the floor of the dojo.

>>
>> "Oro-ro-ro~!"
>>
>> "Kenshin!"
>>
>> "_Ano_... I was just walking by to check to see if you were okay. . . ."
>>
>> "Oh. We're fine. Um, Tsu-tsubame has decided to start training in Kamiya Kasshin-Ryu."
>>
>> _____
>>
>> **1999**
>>
>> Sagara Yuukiko wanted to close her eyes and get some sleep. It had been a long day. She was sick and tired of waking up in the middle of the night because of those stupid dreams. Sick and tired and a little scared. She had woken up last night with tears streaming down her face. She didn't know that anyone could cry in their sleep, but she had been.
>>
>> Yuukiko hardly remembered what happened in her sleep. Images flashed in her mind of a handsome man with flowing red hair and a scar on the left side of his face. His voice speaking gravely to her. His arms around her....

>>
 >> _This has been going on way too long. I don't care how unforgettable that guy is; I have to stop having them. Reality, Yuuki, is a wonderful thing. He does not exist. He does not exist. He does not exist._ And even if he did, he's been dead for more than hundred years. She sighed in frustration. She was not going to dream of him!
 >>
 >> _No more. No more. No more._
 >>
 >> _Maybe I should just talk to someone about them._
 >>
 >> But the dreams seemed so private, personal. She didn't want to tell anyone else about them. She didn't want to have to share what she felt. The warmth. The love. Even the sadness. _What am I doing? I'm acting like don't even want them to stop ._
 >>
 >> Yuukiko sighed again. She was going to go to sleep. If she was going to dream or not was up to whatever god or angel watched over her. Deep down, she acknowledged, the dreams were comforting, even if she felt so emotionally drained afterwards.
 >>
 >> As she slipped into sleep, her last clear thought was, _The promise. It is time for it to be fulfilled. It is time._ Then the night took hold.

* * *

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5. the awakening

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 5 - The Awakening

> **Mirai No Yakusoku**

>

>

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>Yuukiko= Brave Child
Kakushin= Core/Heart

> Warning: It's not all that happy to begin with!! ^_^ Originally written in 898. Revisions made: 11/20/98.

>Actually...I didn't make that many changes. Just little things!
 Updated with new revisions: 1/24/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> Yoko-chan (ardith@hanabatake.com)
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>

> **Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 5 - The Awakening**

>
>> This dream was different, Yuukiko knew instinctively. She felt as if she wasn't really a part of it, but a watcher in the wings. The dream before.... She had died. No, she did not die. Kaoru died. _She was Kaoru. She was_
>>
>> The vague dreams that had bothered her before suddenly sharpened into concrete memories. The images, the feelings flooded her. She fell to her knees, absorbing all of it, feeling the joy, the pain, the love. All of it at once.
>>
>> The tears came again. Before, she hadn't understood... The dreams had been hazy and far off, night after night. Every time she had awakened, she didn't have the whole picture because it faded before she could absorb more than wisps of what had happened to her.
>>
>> But this time... It was as if she was awake, conscious of everything. The dreams of the past solidified into her mind. She tried to steady her shaking legs, rising to look around at where she was, her heart pounding.
>>
>> A dojo? The dojo. The Kamiya Dojo. Yuukiko felt the wood of the wall against her finger tips. It was all real....
>>
>> _Voices?_
>>
>> Yuukiko turned to walk out of the practice room, towards the conversation. Was she in the past? She looked down at herself and noticed that she was dressed in a kimono of sky blue. She felt at her face and hair. Kaoru's clothing? Was she Kaoru now?
>>
>> "Hello?" she called out hesitantly.
>>
>> The others didn't look up at her. They continued to argue and tease one another, speaking over each other without stopping. _Like a family._ Yuukiko looked at each of their faces, tears filling her eyes. _Minna_
>>
>> All of them were here. Yahiko, sitting with Tsubame. Tae nearby with a tray of tea. Megumi, leaning on Sanosuke. Her smiling face lifted to his. _And Kenshin.... _ Kenshin was there sitting and laughing at their jokes.
>>
>> They all looked older than the last dream. Yahiko was much taller and so was Tsubame. How much time had passed? Years? Yuukiko stood off, watching them. These people had been Kaoru's friends. These people had loved her. Yuukiko remembered everything.
>>
>> **She was Kaoru.**
>>
>> _Kenshin._
>>
>> She looked at the man she had loved so long ago. Lifetimes ago. He smiled slightly at what Yahiko was saying. Yuukiko stepped forward, her hand automatically reaching out to him. _Kenshin...._
>>
>> His face suddenly changed, the soft smile fading as his eyes grew sad for a second. He seemed to stare off to the spot where she stood.
>>

>> "_Ja_... I'm off for a walk," he told them with a quiet smile.
"I'll be back."

>>

>> "Sure, Kenshin," Yahiko replied, grabbing at the snacks that were left for Kenshin and stuffing them in his mouth. "I'll watch these for you." Tsubame playfully slapped at his hand as he reached for more.

>>

>> "Thank you, Yahiko," he said with a slight smile as he walked outside.

>>

>> Yuukiko followed him. No one could see her. Was she a ghost? Kaoru's ghost? The answer to why she was dreaming was here. In this dream, she was not Kaoru. _No._ Everything was becoming clear.

>>

>> _Kaoru and I have become one. Her memories have become my memories. I am her. She is me. The past and the future are a circle. There is no beginning or end. It is time for the promise to be fulfilled. The circle will be closed...._

>>

>> Yuukiko followed behind him as Kenshin walked out of the dojo onto the dirt road. He paused to buy some flowers from a street vender before continuing on to a small cemetery. Daisies. Yuukiko loved daisies.

>>

>> Kenshin stopped in front of a small marker. He put the flowers down, bending down slowly.

>>

>> "Kaoru. Hello. Time passes quickly, doesn't it?" he said in a hushed voice. He smiled sadly. Yuukiko moved closer to him, needing to be closer to him.

>>

>> "Kenshin." Yuukiko's whisper seemed to float away. He couldn't hear her anyway.

>>

>> "I hope I'm not bothering you. Sometimes I just need to come to talk, you know. Later on tonight, we're going to the Akabeko to celebrate Yahiko's birthday. Kaoru, can you believe that he's already 16? A man. Time flies by so fast. I'm helping him practice a bit, but he's teaching now. He's spending a lot of time with Tsubame. Tsubame is working hard at the Kamiya Kasshin-Ryu, too. She's really good, Kaoru. You would be so proud of both of them.

>>

>> "Megumi and Sanosuke are happy together, too. They're expecting again. Can you believe it? The way those two started, I thought they would kill each other before admit they were in love.

>>

>> "Kaoru..." His voice grew strained with emotion. "I miss you. As time goes, the pain gets softer, but I still miss you. But we are all still together. All of us. Losing you still hurts, but it has made us all stronger. I miss you so much sometimes... Sometimes I can feel you watching me. Maybe it's just me. Maybe I need to think that. Maybe I need to think you're still here with me."

>>

>> "Kenshin. Our next lives will be happier. We will meet again." Yuukiko whispered. Kenshin looked up suddenly, to where she stood.

>>

>> "Kaoru?" He stepped towards her. His eyes filled with disbelief.

>>
 >> "Kenshin? You can see me?"
 >>
 >> "Kaoru?" He looked so vulnerable. "Am I going crazy?"
 >>
 >> "No. No... I just wanted to see you one more time. I wanted to see you so much," Yuukiko said truthfully. She wanted to see him again. She loved him. This feeling, this need, was love. Something clicked in her heart. She recognized that this soul was the mate to hers. Everything she felt lifetimes ago was etched in her heart. _Always. Forever._
 >>
 >> She moved closer to him, feeling an ache in her heart. In the past, she had died. She had lost this man and left him alone. She wanted to ease his pain. She wanted to give him hope, as much for her on sake as for his.
 >>
 >> "Kenshin. I promise you that we will meet again. Not in this life, but we ****WILL**** meet again. Our souls will find one another. Please. Try to be happy in this life. I will wait for you in the next one. I promise you."
 >>
 >> "Kaoru..."
 >>
 >> "Be happy, Kenshin. Please be happy."
 >>
 >> "I am. I will be. Kaoru..." He moved that last foot towards her, grabbing her and holding her close. She was solid. Real. She hugged him back, savoring the feeling of him in her arms. "I love you..."
 >>
 >> "I love you, too. Forever, Kenshin." Her voice was becoming faint. She looked at her hands. They were fading. _This dream is ending_, she thought. Sadness crashed over her. It was time for her to leave him again. "Good-bye Kenshin. Until the next time."
 >>
 >> "Kaoru?" His voice broke saying her name. He stared at her as she began to fade and flicker. Kaoru reappeared, dressed in strange clothing. A weird sort of short kimono. Western clothing? Her long hair fell around her face and down her back. She was beautiful. She smiled softly at him.
 >>
 >> "Be happy, Kenshin. For me," Kaoru said as she faded totally. Then she was gone.
 >>
 >> Kenshin thought he heard "I love you" as he walked back home, but it could have been the wind. He smiled at that. They will be together.

* * *

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Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 6 - Promises

> **Mirai No Yakusoku**

>
>

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>Notes:
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>Japanese Names:
Yuukiko= Brave Child

>Kakushin= CoreHeart

>Kakushin's grandfather is 80. His grandfather was Myoujin Yahiko.

Japanese Notes:

> Okaeri: Welcome Home.

>Sumimasen:Excuse Me.

> Ojii-san: Grandfather

> Obaa-san: Grandmother

> Warning: It's not all that happy to begin with!! ^_^

Originally written in 9/98. Revisions made: 11/20/98.

> Updated with new revisions: 124/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> Yoko-chan (ardith@hanabatake.com)
 <http://www.hanabatake.com>

>

> **Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 6 - Promises**

>

>> "Kenshin..." The sound of her own voice woke her up. Yuukiko opened her eyes. Her face was wet with tears. Again. She didn't know if they were tears of joy or of sadness. Maybe both. She sighed as she got up to face the day. The sun wasn't up yet, but she couldn't bear to go back to sleep. The images from her dreams, her memories, still haunted her.

>>

>> _Kamiya Kaoru._ She was Kamiya Kaoru. She had died and left the man she loved more than life behind. _Kenshin._

>>

>> At the cemetery, Kenshin's eyes looked like they had seen too much, suffered too much. This was a man who had loved her. _You will be together again,_ the voice insisted. She said that much to him. It was to give him hope, to give herself hope. She loved him.

>>

>> The look in his eyes, when she made that promise, the flash of hope.... Yuukiko ached for him. But their love was strong enough to break the barrier of time. If Kaoru was reincarnated, then Kenshin must be, too. All of this wasn't just a dream. _It had to be real. I love him._

>>

>> Yuukiko sighed in frustration. What was she thinking? She had to get ready for school. Whatever was going to happen was in the hands of fate. Philosophizing about past lives was not going to change that.

>>

>> _The time has come. The promise will be fulfilled...._

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Myoujin Kakushin sat in the school library, staring out the window. The day totally reflected his mood. The sky was overcast, ominous. It was as if the sky was going to bust. A storm was coming. Kakushin sighed, trying to keep his frustration in check. He kept thinking about the dream he had last night. Those dreams seemed so real. The smell of jasmine. That voice.... The love.

>>

>> _Kaoru._ In the dreams, Kamiya Kaoru was the one person that he could not live without. But she had been taken from him without any warning. No-not him. _Himura Kenshin._

>>

>> He had been Himura Kenshin in the dreams. He had been an assassin, a peacemaker, a rurouni. He had loved and lost the woman who completed him. _I promise you that we will meet again, _ she whispered that to him last night in his dreams.

>>

>> _Kaoru...._

>>

>> Was he going crazy? They were just dreams. Weren't they? He sighed again. Maybe he should see his grandfather and talk about this. He had hoped to keep the dreams all to himself, they seemed so private. He was reluctant to share them with anyone else, but this was getting way too weird.

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Kakushin went home right after school. His grandparent's dojo was in the older part of Tokyo. It looked out of place, but oddly tranquil, so near to the hustle and bustle of the city.

>>

>> Just the year before, he had been happy and whole. He and his parents had lived in Nagasaki. The year before, he had left to go to America, to study abroad. The year before.... everything seemed so different. Then his parents died in a fiery crash when the pilot lost control of the plane going to Tokyo. That night, everything changed. His whole world changed.

>>

>> Moving into the dojo had been his decision. His parents had left him with enough to be self-sufficient, but he wanted to stay with his grandparents. Kakushin was their last blood relative. And he needed them to be close. After the plane crash took his parents, he needed someone to hold on to. His grandparents accepted him as he was, supporting him in his pain. It was their pain, too. They stepped back, waiting for him to make the move to come back to the world, to start living again.

>>

>> His parents had been so in love. They glowed when they were together. He was glad that if they had to die, they went together. But he had been hurt and alone. The world he had always known was destroyed. He had needed to work through all of that, to build himself up again from it.

>>

>> The night his parents died, he began to dream. He dreamt he had been a child, an orphan. _Shinta._ The images shifted, and they faded as if they were really memories. They became vague flashes, images he could never really grasp. He witnessed a massacre, but he was saved by a tall man. His master. Through the nights after that, he continued to dream out the life of a man named Himura Kenshin. The dreams were vague, blurred memories. He dreamt of war and death. Of a woman and the scent of white plums. There was love and loss in these

dreams, but when he woke, the images were disjointed. _They are just dreams,_ he reasoned, but they did not just go away.

>>

>> For the past year, the dreams continued. In them, years passed. They didn't really disturb him until he saw her.... _Kamiya Kaoru._ Her name stuck out in his mind. All the people, all the images, hers was the one that truly haunted him. She came to him in so many forms. Flashing eyes, sweet smiles, soft sobs echoed in his thoughts in the day.. He loved her. How could he be in love with a person from the past? How could he be in love with a dream?

>>

>> "Ojiisan? Are you in here?" Kakushin entered the practice room of the dojo, closing the wooden door behind him. His grandfather sat in the center of the room meditating.

>>

>> "Kakushin. _Okaeri_."

>>

>> "_Sumimasen_, Ojiisan." Kakushin sat down in front of his grandfather, moving smoothly and silently into the lotus position. His mother had trained him in kendo since he was a child. He was very comfortable in this world.

>>

>> "What's wrong?" He smiled at his grandson. He had been looking troubled lately. He was hoping that the boy would confide in him about whatever was troubling him.

>>

>> "I..." He could not say it.

>>

>> "Something is definitely bothering you. Is it a girl?" he asked, wiggling his eyebrows.

>>

>> "Ojiisan...", Kakushin muttered to himself. His grandfather was a romantic. He wanted his grandson happy. And apparently, to him, girls would be the best path to happiness.

>>

>> "Come on. You can tell me."

>>

>> _No I can't. You'll think I'm going crazy._

>>

>> "Ojiisan. Do you know of a Himura Kenshin?"

>>

>> "Himura Kenshin...." His grandfather smiled at that name. "He was my grandfather's foster father. Yes. I know of Himura Kenshin."

>>

>> *****

>>

>> "Sagara Yuukiko, what's wrong?" Aya asked playfully. When Yuukiko looked guiltily at her, she frowned. Guilt was not her usual response to her teasing. Her best friend was acting very strangely.

>>

>> They took shelter from the storm at Aya's family's restaurant. The old fashioned style of it was oddly comforting, reminding Yuukiko of her dreams.

>>

>> "Aya-chan... Nothing. I- I...."

>>

>> "Hmmmm. You won't tell me...", she frowned at her best friend. "Yuuki-chan, I'm really hurt."

>>

>> "Okay. You may think this is weird," she took a breath to fortify

herself. Aya was going to think she was crazy. "I've been having weird dreams about a man named Himura Kenshin, set in the Meiji era. I think I've been watching too many historical movies or some..." Yuukiko stopped her babbling as she caught the look in Aya's eyes.

>>

>> "Himura Kenshin?" Aya was pale, shocked.

>>

>> "Yeah. What's wrong, Aya-chan?" Shock was not the reaction she expected.

>>

>> "_Ano_... I had dreams about the Meiji era, too."

>>

>> "You did? Why didn't you tell me?" Yuukiko demanded.

>>

>> "Well, they seemed so private. And I didn't know if you'd think I was going mad. I thought I was going mad...." Makimachi Aya explained, her voice hushed. "Then I met Rui."

>>

>> "Rui? Our Rui? Rui, your boyfriend?" Yuukiko asked, confused. Rui and Aya became close very quickly after he came to school. He often seemed distant and cold. He was handsome, but aloof, which turned most people off. But once you were a friend, he was there for you. He made Aya so happy and that was good enough for Yuukiko.

>>

>> "Yeah. I was dreaming I was Makimachi Misao." Yuukiko stared at her best friend. "I was in love with Shinomori Aoshi."

>>

>> "Misao. Then Rui is...."

>>

>> "Yeah. Weird, huh? But if you're dreaming about Himura Kenshin, then you must be-"

>>

>> "Kamiya Kaoru," Yuukiko said hoarsely.

>>

>> "Oh, Yuukiko...." Aya hugged her close. "You aren't going crazy. I know how it feels.... But it's real. I guess we're all coming together again. All of us. The circle of time...."

>>

>> "The promise will be fulfilled," Yuukiko murmured. "Aya, all of this is real, then. All of this really happened in the past? I can't believe it...."

>>

>> "Yeah." Aya was laughing and crying at the same time. "I guess true love never dies."

>>

>> "No. Maybe soulmates always find each other," Yuukiko smiled. "Aya. It's almost time, then. I will find him."

>>

>> "Yuukiko...."

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Kakushin stood in front of the dojo in the rain, his hair was getting soaked, but he didn't seem to feel it.

>>

>> He couldn't believe it. All of it was true. The dreams were really flashes of the past. His grandfather sat and told him all about the man who helped raise his grandfather after he was left an orphan, confirming his memories of the past. His grandfather didn't really

remember Himura Kenshin. He had been a very young child when he had died. The legendary swordsman had lived a long life. But his grandfather had grown up on the his stories.

>>

>> The dojo was renamed the Myoujin Dojo in the early 1900's. The kenjitsu that was taught, his grandfather explained, was a hybrid of the Kamiya Kasshin Ryuu and the Hiten Mitsurugi Ryuu.

>>

>> Kakushin's mother had been a student. It was at the dojo, she met his father.... His grandfather went on and on about the history of the dojo and their family, but Kakushin wasn't paying attention anymore. The tangled web of the past and the present shook him to the core.

>>

>> Himura Kenshin really lived. He was really Himura Kenshin, then.

>>

>> _I promise you that we will meet again,_ a soft voice whispered on the wind. He would find her. _ It was time._

* * *

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7. reunions I

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 7 - Reuniouns I

> <blockquote> <div class="center">Mirai No Yakusoku

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>Kakushin= CoreHeart

> Kakushin's grandfather is 80. His grandfather was Myoujin Yahiko.

 Japanese Notes:

> Masaka: It can't be.

> Demo: But

> Ja ne: Bye.

> Mata Ashita: See ya tomorrow.

> Warning: It's not all that happy to begin with!!
 ^_^

Originally written 9/98. Revisions made: 11/20/98.

> Updated with new revisions: 124/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> Yoko-chan (ardith@hanabatake.com)
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>

****Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 7 - Reunions I****

> The rain fell steadily. It was almost hypnotic. Yuukiko stared out at the busy street from Aya's room above her restaurant. Aya's family had lived in Tokyo for generations. One of Misao and Aoshi's children had taken Makimachi as his last name and settled there long ago, Aya explained.

>

> "So you're really related to yourself?" Yuukiko asked with a smile.

>

> "Weird, huh?" Aya grinned. "Rui can trace his ancestry back, too. He's related to some important Meiji policeman named Fujita Gorou. Fujita's wife was named Tokio.

>

> "Anyway, he just kept dreaming about us. I kept dreaming about him. Then we met. Boom! Magic....," Aya sighed soulfully, then grinned at her best friend. When Rui came into her life, she became whole. She wanted that for Yuukiko. "Yuukiko, your last name is Sagara. According to my great-great-grandmother's diary, Sagara Sanosuke was Kenshin's best friend."

>

> "Your great-great-grandmother's diary?" Yuukiko asked, her attention focused on the scene outside. There was something nagging at her, but she couldn't place it.

>

> "Yes. She was the wife of Misao's son. The one who moved here to start our restaurant. She was the eldest daughter of Myoujin Yahiko and Tsubame. She kept a diary.... Yuukiko?" The look on Yuukiko's face stopped her mid explanation.

>

> "Myoujin... Yahiko?" Yuukiko paled at the name.

>

> "Yuukiko?" Aya grabbed her as Yuukiko began to sway. "Are you okay?"

>

> "Yes. I-I just remembered something..." Yuukiko sat down beside Aya on her bed. More memories had suddenly flashed in her mind. It was like looking into a bright light, shocking her for a second. That name suddenly triggered something in her.

>

> "What is it?" Aya asked, looking very concerned. Yuukiko looked like she was about to faint. And Yuukiko never fainted.

>

> "Yahiko was the name of Kaoru's student. He must have been 10 or 11 when I- when Kaoru was killed. Myoujin.... That must have been his last name."

>

> "Then I'm related to him, too....," she grinned happily. "Hey, you know what? There are still Myoujins in Tokyo."

>

> "There are?"

>

> "Yeah. They're really distant relatives, but they own a dojo near here."

>

> "A dojo? _Masaka_..." Yuukiko closed her eyes and pictured the dojo in her dream. Could it still be around? Tokyo had changed so much in the over 140 years since the time those memories had taken place....

>
> "Yuuki-chan? Do you want to go see the dojo? I can get Rui and we can walk there from here," Aya offered.
>
> "No. Maybe later.... It's too soon." A voice inside her urged her to go. But she wanted to do it alone. She needed to see for herself, without anyone there with her. The memories were much too private for an audience, no matter who they were.
>
> "Okay...." They lapsed into silence, listening to the rain fall.
>
> "My family has been here for a long time, Aya-chan," Yuukiko said, breaking the silence. "I checked when I began having the dreams, but the names didn't click till last night. Even then, I didn't believe everything. I am related to Sagara Sanosuke...."
>
> "Who did he marry?"
>
> "One of the first women doctors around. Her name was Megumi. Takani Megumi. Those people were in my dream last night.... I saw them all. And they were all happy."
>
> "Were they? That's good."
>
> They were all happy. _Everyone but Kenshin._
>
> "Aya. I better head back," she said, stretching as she got off the bed. "Mom and dad will be home soon."
>
> "_Demo_,.... It's still raining." She looked worriedly out to the streets. The sky was dark gray and it didn't look like it was going to end anytime soon. "Your parents would let you stay over."
>
> "I'm a big girl, Aya," she returned with a smile, "I have to go now, though. I don't want to have to go home in the dark."
>
> "I can walk with you to the station," Aya offered, her face still full of concern.
>
> "Nah. I'll be fine. Don't worry." _I have to go see the dojo. _
>
> "Be careful."
>
> "Yes, mama," Yuukiko teased as she got her belongings together.
>
> "And don't stay out in the rain," Aya teased back.
>
> "Got it!_ Ja ne_, Aya-chan. _Mata Ashita_"
>
> "_Ja_" Aya hugged her fiercely. "Everything will work out, Yuuki-chan."
>
> "I know," she whispered.
>
> *****
>
> Yuukiko walked in the rain. The drops were oddly cooling on her heated skin. Something was going to happen. She didn't know which direction to go. The dojo was near, but nothing was the same anymore.

She closed her eyes and spun around until something inside her told her to stop and walk. And she did.

>

> Something so strong was calling her, she couldn't stop herself. _The time is here,_ the voice insisted. _The time is here...._ The last piece of the puzzle had fallen into place. She walked, as if in a trance. _It was time._

>

> _Kenshin._

>

> ()*()*()*()*()*()*()*()*()

>

> Kakushin was waiting. Something was going to happen. He didn't know what it was, but he felt something tugging at his soul. The dreams, the truth... All of it was falling into place. _It was time._ He wanted her to be here. He needed her.

>

> _How can I feel like this?_, he asked himself. _How can I love someone from a dream?_

>

> _Because you need her. You need her more than anything else in the world. Without her, you are less of a person. You need her. She promised she would come to you._

>

> Leaning back against the front wall of the dojo, he stared at the people rushing by, the rain forcing them to seek shelter. Turning to look up at the weeping skies, he ran a hand through his long, wet hair, thinking about what his grandfather had said.

>

> Kenshin lived for a long time. He never married or seemed interested in any women. His grandfather was told that he had lost someone very important to him as young man. Kakushin knew he had lost the other half of his soul.

>

> _She promised me we would meet again. She promised. Kaoru. Come back to me. Come back to me. If you are real, come back to me. Please..._ Kakushin stared up at the rain and prayed.

>

> ()*()*()*()*()*()*()*()*()

>

> Yuukiko didn't know why she was doing this. Wandering in the rain without direction, she just followed her gut. Something was calling her.

>

> The old dojo might not even have any of the answers that she was looking for, but for some reason she had a feeling that it was an integral part of the puzzle. It had to have some clue to what was going on. The dojo was the site of so many memories.

>

> _Kenshin...._

>

> She hoped that he had been happy. She felt a twinge of jealousy at the thought of another woman entering his life after her, but she stamped it down. It was petty to feel like that. Kaoru had died. She should be happy for him if he found someone else. She loved him and hoped that he had happiness. Kenshin deserved happiness.

>

> Yuukiko closed her eyes, trying to picture him. The last dream, he stood in the cemetery, his long hair tied back. His violet eyes gleaming with hope, with love. She could feel him so near. She wanted

him to be there with her.

>

> Until last night, the dreams invoked only impressions of emotions. She didn't understand what was happening to her. All the images were scrambled. It wasn't until last night when so much of it became clear. It wasn't until Aya confirmed so many things that she could believe. And she believed.

>

> _Please. Help me. Let me find him. I need him. Let me find him. Please...._

>

> "Oh!" She exclaimed, bumping into someone. She tried to get her balance back, reached out to steady herself. She grabbed at a pair of strong arms. Yuukiko opened her eyes and stared up into a pair of violet ones. _Violet?_

>

> "_Sumimasen_" she apologized. Or at least, she tried to. She couldn't seem to find her voice.

>

> He reached out to touch her face, pushing her wet locks away. His own red locks were soaked. His eyes were burning with emotion. With recognition. With love.

>

> "You're here," he said roughly. "You're really here. I'm not dreaming...."

>

> He moved forward, pulling her close. The rain mixed with their tears. She reached up to touch his face. _Real._ He was real.

>

> "I love you," he whispered, moving forward to kiss her. He kissed her like Kenshin never had a chance to. His lips moved over hers, worshipping... Welcoming... Loving....

>

> If rain continued to fall as they held each other, they did not notice. If anyone stopped and stared at the sight of two people in out in public in such a passionate embrace, they did not notice. The couple did not care. This was a kiss they had waited lifetimes for.

>

> "Are you two going to do that all night?" Kakushin's grandfather queried from the gates of the dojo. It wasn't every day he found his only grandson kissing a girl in public.... Very passionately.... Heck, steam was evaporating off of the pair.

>

> The couple didn't seem to hear him. So he just stood and waited. They had to stop sometime. Breathing was essential to life.

>

> "Ahem," he cleared his throat. Still no reaction. Finally, he tapped his grandson on the shoulder. "You two will catch cold if you don't stop soon...."

>

> Kakushin pulled away, but Yuukiko pulled him back to her. She needed to be close to him again after so long. She had been praying. He was here. He was real. She needed to reassure herself.

>

> "Ahem," his grandfather repeated. They were soaking wet. The rain began to lighten, then finally stopped. The couple slowly pulled away from each other, their breath ragged, but they still didn't turn to the elderly kenjitsu master. They only had eyes for each other.

>

> "Hello. I'm Myoujin Kakushin," he introduced himself, pushing his wet hair away from his face. "Have I told you yet that I love you?"

>

> "Yes," She smiled at him. "And that's really good because I love you, too," Yuukiko said breathlessly. Her face was flushed from the kiss. She smiled up at him. He was here. "I'm Sagara Yuukiko."

* * *

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8. reunions II

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 8 - Reunions II

> **Mirai No Yakusoku**

>

>

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 This is my first attempt at the art of fanfiction. Please be gentle. Comments are greatly appreciated!!!

>Notes:
 The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. All the characters I create belong to me.

>Japanese Names:
 Yuukiko= Brave Child

> Kakushin= CoreHeart

> Kakushin's grandfather is 80. His grandfather was Myoujin Yahiko.

Japanese Notes:

>Demo: But

>Ja ne: Bye.

>Mata Ashita: See ya tomorrow.

> Warning: It's not all that happy to begin with!! ^_^

Originally written in 10/98. Revisions made: 11/20/98.

> Updated with new revisions: 124/99 - Thanks to Amy Forsyth

> Yoko: the characters won't die. ^^;; I was going to try to end it this chapter, but I got another idea. Thanks to Tae and Angela-sama for the editing help.

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>

> **Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 8 - Reunions II**

>

>> "You're here." Yuukiko couldn't stop touching him, just to reassure herself that he was real. Kenshin.... _Kakushin._ Her dreams had been his dreams. He even smelled the same.

>>

>> "You look exactly the same. You're beautiful." Kakushin could not resist kissing her again. He felt something in his soul ease with her near him. "I never want to lose you again." He held her so tightly against him that it hurt, but she didn't want him to stop. It was him....

>>
>> "Kakushin.... I won't ever leave you. Not ever."
>>
>> His grandfather had dragged the drenched pair out of the rain and into the dojo. He had found a light yukata for her to wear until her clothes were finished drying. Then, with a grin and a couple of comments, he left the couple to be alone.
>>
>> "Sagara Yuukiko? Heh. Interesting. I think you've found the right girl, Kakushin. The Sagara family is a good, strong one. Your children.... Ah! I can't wait! Heh. I'll be a great-grandfather!"
>>
>> "Oro?" Kakushin squeaked in surprise. "O-Ojiisan.... W-We're still in high school."
>>
>> "And we just met," Yuukiko added. Kakushin's grandfather wanted them to have kids? Sure, they were hitting it off, but basically they were still teenagers....
>>
>> "Heh. Don't worry. You two seem mature enough for it. Now, I'm just going to go to the practice room and meditate. You two can do whatever you want." He rubbed his hands together with glee. "Wait. I'll go ask your grandmother to call Yuukiko-chan's parents so that she can stay over. I know Obaachan is excited. _Sagara_ Yuukiko. I wonder..."
>>
>> "_Demo_.... I-"
>>
>> "Obaachan can get your parents to let you stay over. Don't worry. Tomorrow is Saturday. We'll get them to come over and meet Kakushin. Perfect. Everything will be arranged in no time."
>>
>> Kakushin could only stutter a faint protest. "A-arranged? O-Ojiisan.... We... We're-"
>>
>> "Sa! I'll leave you be now. The weather is still too bad to let you go home now."
>>
>> "Ojiisan. It's stopped raining."
>>
>> "It isn't raining? Don't worry, Kakushin. I'll take care of everything." With that, his grandfather left the room whistling.
>>
>> "Ummm.... That was weird."
>>
>> "Yeah, I'd say. I guess no one is going to question this, huh? The same thing happened to-"
>>
>> "Huh? What is it?" Kakushin cupped her face in his hands to look into her eyes.
>>
>> "You know, some of the others must have passed over, too. My best friend is Makimachi Aya.... She and her boyfriend Rui are Misao and Aoshi. Everyone reacted the same way with them. Instant acceptance. Everything was like a done deal."
>>
>> "Misao and Aoshi...? I wonder why we were all born again. We had a promise between us. But the others?" Yuukiko shivered suddenly. Kakushin pulled her closer to him, trying to warm her. She had turned pale. Kakushin could feel her heartbeat speed up.

>>
>> "Yuukiko?" he asked worriedly. For a moment, she seemed to be far away, seeing something that he couldn't.
>>
>> "Ka-Kakushin.... We have to find the others. There is something going on here. We have to find them. Soon."
>>
>> "Yuukiko." Kakushin felt it, too. There was a sudden dark urgency in the air. He pulled her closer. This time.... This time.... He was not going to lose her. Not now. Not ever.
>>
>> "There is more to this than just us, Kakushin. We have to get Aya and Rui."
>>
>> *****
>>
>> "Yuukiko! I knew that you went off to find him!" Aya winked and wagged her finger at her best friend. "You had that look in your eye when you left."
>>
>> "What look is that, Aya?" said a voice behind her. Rui moved towards his girlfriend like a panther. His movements were smooth and silent. Yuukiko blinked. She never noticed how much he really was like Aoshi until now. There were definitely shades of the Oniwabanshu leader in him.
>>
>> "You know," she grinned up at him, "the Look." She batted her eyes up at him and pouted. Rui blinked down at her, his lips curling just a bit at the sides.
>>
>> "That one?" Kakushin asked, confused. Yuukiko had yet to bat her eyelashes at him. Not that he would mind, but she hadn't done that yet. Kaoru had never batted her eyes at Kenshin, either.
>>
>> "No. That's the other Look. She's just teasing Rui," Yuukiko explained with a grin. "That couple is the ideal opposites-attract type. Aya is flirty and fun. Rui is.... Well, he is serious and quiet. But they seem to just belong together." The couple in front of them were now leaning in close towards each other, their conversation hushed. Kakushin and Yuukiko looked at each other and grinned.
>>
>> "It's good to know that Misao and Aoshi worked it all out. Her love for Aoshi seemed so...."
>>
>> "Yeah. I know. She was so young. I was worried that they- Anyway, they certainly look like they have worked out their differences," commented Kakushin.
>>
>> "Yeah. When they met in this life," Yuukiko put her hands together and sighed dreamily, "it was like magic."
>>
>> "Hey! Yuukiko. You shouldn't talk! Weren't you were the one who called me an hour ago saying in a breathless voice, 'Aya. I found him. **And GOD is he gorgeous!**'? Now, what's this about trouble?" Both Yuukiko and Kakushin blushed at Aya's statement. Aya just tsked at them and turned towards the dojo's entrance.
>>
>> "Let's go in and talk about what's going on."
>>
>> Kakushin led them to the living room. They sat down around the low

table in the center of the room. Night had fallen, but the rain had stopped, so the doors that opened to the gardens were left open. Yuukiko sighed and stared out at the stars. How could she explain what she sensed was going on? She wasn't sure if she was right, but she couldn't just dismiss this.

>>

>> She took a breath and plunged ahead. "I think this is going to be trouble. Now. In this world," Yuukiko explained.

>>

>> "Why do you think that?" Rui sat back, staring at Yuukiko. "I mean, why do you feel like there's something going on?"

>>

>> "I-I don't know. I just have this feeling. I can't seem to get this thought out of my head." Yuukiko sighed in frustration. "I don't know why. I just don't know." When she closed her eyes, she could see blood, feel panic. It was not a like the dreams. When she found Kakushin, she had a moment of clarity. Darkness was rising.

>>

>> "Why were we reborn?" Aya asked suddenly. "Kaoru and Kenshin were torn apart by death. But Aoshi and Misao. They lived a happy life together. I think there's a reason that we were brought back now," she continued. "I agree with Yuuki-chan. There is something more going on here than we understand right now. Kenshin and Kaoru.... Aoshi and Misao...."

>>

>> "Do you think that the others were reborn, too? I mean, all these events seem to be related. I just moved here recently. Our dreams were becoming more and more...real to us. Maybe the others will be drawn here, too," Kakushin mused.

>>

>> Yuukiko closed her eyes. In her mind, she saw the last images that Kaoru had seen. The tears that fell from Kenshin's eyes as she closed hers forever. Back then.... She had been feeling the same dark urgency building up. Back then, she had died. But she didn't think it was about her now. Whatever was going to happen was about more than their small circle of friends.

>>

>> "This town.... This part of Tokyo is the key. We are all here, right?" Rui lay back, put his hands behind his head and closed his eyes to think. "Maybe being in this dojo is giving you a sense of what's happening," he offered in explanation.

>>

>> "The dojo?"

>>

>> "Yeah. Maybe your soul is connected to it. Like it's connected to Kakushin over there."

>>

>> "And all of us are connected to each other? If we came back, what if something followed us to this time?" Kakushin mumbled.

>>

>> "Kakushin?" Yuukiko reached for his hand. She could feel the calluses from his training. It comforted her that he still had them.

>>

>> He squeezed her hand softly and continued. "What if...What if the others came back because there was something that was going to happen in this time. What if we were needed in this time. Our souls must have some unfinished business. We lived before and were essential in changing Japan. Maybe we are alive again for that purpose."

>>

>> "And something was reborn with us?" Yuukiko mused.

>>

>> "We're not planetegers! And this is not an action-adventure story!" Aya said, exasperated. "There is no 50 foot monster we have to fight. Such things don't exist. You've been watching too much Power Rangers."

>>

>> "Not something. Someone." Rui got up and stretched. "How many enemies did you have, 'Kenshin?' Someone who hated you enough might have been reborn. Hate can be as strong as love, can't it? It's not so unfeasible. I mean, all of us were reborn and now remember our past lives together. Why can't an enemy be reborn with us? Someone whose soul could not rest."

>>

>> Kakushin closed his eyes. Enemies? Who was so obsessed that their hate would span time like this? They didn't even know if a real threat was out there. But... Yuukiko's vision. She had such a strong reaction. There had to be something going on.

>>

>> "Kakushin?"

>>

>> "Kenshin had a lot of enemies. It was not a peaceful time back then. I think...." He opened his eyes and looked at all of them. "I think that we need to find out if Megumi and Sano have been 'awakened.' Yahiko, too."

>>

>> "Could Tsubame be here, too?_ Mou!_" Yuukiko muttered to herself. Kakushin grinned at her. He thought she was so cute when she was frustrated. He reached out to grab her hand and kissed her palm.

>>

>> "Yuukiko, we can't possibly solve all these questions tonight. We just have to start looking for the others," Rui said softly. If she was right, though.... They had better try to gather the rest. The question was still how.

>>

>> "Why don't we do a booth at the festival?" Aya spoke up suddenly.

>>

>> "Huh?"

>>

>> "Since we're all at the same school.... I assume that everyone was reborn the same age as us. We could have a fortune telling booth at the school's festival. We have one right before school ends every year," she explained to Kakushin.

>>

>> "How is that going to help?" Yuukiko asked. Aya looked thoughtful for a moment before perking up.

>>

>> "Come here," she ordered. "Give me your hands." Yuukiko put out her hands to her friend. As soon as Aya touched her, she gasped.

>>

>> "What the heck?" Yuukiko exclaimed.

>>

>> "I think if you're looking for someone else, you'll know them. You can feel them. I mean... sense them." Aya answered.

>>

>> "Aya, that has never happened before!" She reached out to touch her best friend's hands again. Nothing.

>>

>> "I don't know. I just felt that I could do it," Aya explained with

a shrug. "Maybe you can only do it if you're looking for someone else. Try thinking in you head, 'Are you one of us?'"

>>

>> "Okay," she replied. "Give me your hand," she ordered to Rui. He placed them in hers and they both gasped.

>>

>> "It works. But what are we going to do? Go through the whole school touching other people to test them?"

>>

>> "No," said Kakushin softly. "We just put up a sign that we analyze dreams and tell fortunes at the festival. I think that would be all we need. Hopefully, the others will be 'awakened' by then."

>>

>> "We have a month before the festival...."

>>

>> "Yes. A month. I say we better get ready, starting this week at school."

>>

>> "What club could we do this for?"

>>

>> "What about the kendo club?" suggested Yuukiko. "We all can do some martial arts, right?" _Couldn't they?_

>>

>> "I dunno. I haven't done any ninja type things in a long time, Yuukiko."

>>

>> "What about a history club?" offered Rui.

>>

>> "History?"

>>

>> "Yeah. We could even dress up for the festival in clothes that we would have worn during Meiji," Aya added. She liked the idea. "We could start one right away, right?"

>>

>> "We're starting a club. Just for this?" Yuukiko asked with a grin.

>>

>> "You never know. It might actually get the people we're looking for to come over and join at school. And we DO know about history." It was kinda stretching it, but it just might work. For the rest of the night, they made plans. The others had to be found. And if they all were in the surrounding area, this might just be the best way to do it. None of them wanted to give up what they had rediscovered in this life. If there was a threat on the horizon, they were going to be prepared.

* * *

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9. visions

> ****Mirai No Yakusoku****

>

>

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> Notes:
 The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. All the characters I create belong to me.

>Japanese Names:
Yuukiko= Brave Child

>Kakushin= CoreHeart

>Yuunosuke= Brave + nosuke ^.^
Keiko = Graceful Child (Same name as Megumi and Sano's youngest in RK: A New Era)

> Kakushin's grandfather is 80. His grandfather was Miyoujin Yahiko.

 Warning: It is not all that happy to begin with!! ^_^

> Originally written in 199.

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>

> ****Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 9 - Visions****

>

>> "Kakushin!" Yuukiko felt like she was drowning. She couldn't move fast enough. She couldn't stop what was happening. "Don't!" Kakushin's eyes were amber. Amber? _Battousai. _ "Please. Please... Kakushin. Please. Stop. It's me! It's Yuukiko!" But he was turning away from her. She ran to him, wrapping her arms around him, as if she could hold him back.

>>

>> "Please. Kakushin. Please. Snap out of it! Don't do this." He was going to kill. If that happened....

>>

>> "Please!" She couldn't let him do it. No matter what. It might destroy him.

>>

>> "He has to pay." His eyes were hard. Cold. She had to reach him. But he wasn't listening. He wasn't even looking at her. He shrugged her off and unsheathed his sword. "How could he do that to you, Yuukiko?" But he didn't seem to register that she was there. ****HOW COULD HE?***** Yuukiko looked down at the blade, light glinted off it's surface.

>>

>> ****The sword was not a sakaba-tou. ****

>>

>> "Kakushin!" No! No! No! STOP!

>>

>> *****

>>

>> "Yuukiko?" She felt strong hands grip her shoulders. His touch. His smell. Kakushin. He could calm her more than anything. Without opening her eyes, she reached out to him, pulling him close. "Yuukiko, what's wrong?"

>>

>> "Ka-Kakushin?"

>>

>> "Bad dream?" She didn't answer, snuggling in closer to his warmth. She didn't want that dream to ever come true. Never. She wouldn't let it happen. "Yuukiko. What happened in the dream?" He cupped her face, silently asking for her to open her eyes and answer him. _Beloved._

She opened her eyes to reassure herself that it was all real. He was safe. She would make sure that he would stay that way. "What happened?" he prodded.

>>

>> _You became Battousai. You were going to kill. I don't know what happened. I just can't let that vision come true. I can't let you do that. I can't let it happen. _

>>

>> "I...I dreamt...." She closed her eyes and saw the wicked glint of light playing along the sword that was not a sakaba-tou. She saw the anger in his amber eyes. "I dreamt I couldn't stop you..." The anger. The hate. It all washed over her. The emotions were so powerful that they reached across the dream to reality.

>>

>> "Stop me? From what?" Whatever she saw in her dream had deeply disturbed her.

>>

>> "From killing. From becoming Battousai."

>>

>> "Battousai? Were you dreaming about me or Kenshin?"

>>

>> "You." She took a ragged breath. It did little to calm her. Dreams had become such a big part of her life, she couldn't just shake this one off. She hated the loss of control. It was like a big puzzle. "Kakushin, what if it comes true?"

>>

>> Kakushin didn't reply. He knew that if anything happened to her, he might very well be able to hurt another person. He could not allow history to repeat itself. He didn't know if he could remain sane if anything were to happen to her. He wiped the tears away, soothing her with his touch. He hesitated to tell her. Battousai was a part of him. Just like he was a part of Kenshin. He could only be whole with her in his life. "I...Yuukiko.... Battousai is..."

>>

>> "I won't let it come true, Kakushin," she stated flatly. "Something... someone is trying to destroy us. I can feel it." The darkness was out there. Waiting. But she wasn't going to let it get what it wanted. "They are just waiting for the opportunity. We can't let them."

>>

>> "If anything happened to you..." He pulled her close, as if making sure he could.

>>

>> "Kakushin. If anything happens to me, you can get past it. You can be strong. You have to be. It would destroy you to become Battousai." _If anything happened to him, can you be as strong, Yuukiko? _

>>

>> "It would destroy me to lose you," he whispered against her hair.

>>

>> "No. Don't let it. We belong together, Kakushin. We were brought together. Nothing is going to tear us apart again." There was that familiar glint of determination in her eyes. Stubbornness. He kissed her for her bravery.

>>

>> "No. Nothing."

>>

>> *****

>>

>> "What the hell are we doing here, woman?" He was feeling a little

exasperated. Not an unfamiliar sensation when it came to figuring out his girlfriend.

>>

>> "Yuu-chan, it will be fun." For some reason, she wanted to the festival at their old high school. Yuunosuke just shook his head. Women! No matter how long he was with her, he still didn't understand.

>>

>> "Keiko, you know I love you, but you sure get wacky thoughts in that head of yours. It's a holiday, why don't we use the time better?" He leered at her meaningfully.

>>

>> "Yuunosuke, you really have a one track mind." She kissed him quickly on the lips, moving out of his reach before he could grab hold. "You know those dreams we had in high school?"

>>

>> "You mean the ones that led to the incident in the equipment room?" There was such a fond look of lust on his face that Keiko could only laugh. The certified bad boy of the school getting together with the highest ranking student in the school was borderline scandalous. Especially the way they got together. It was a game of cat and mouse.

>>

>> Seta Yuunosuke had been labeled as trouble for school authorities as soon as he got in to school. He had had a reputation from middle school for having a bad-ass attitude. Of course, that didn't stop the school from accepting him. He had the grades and the family backing for it. Reputation and attitude was not going to detract from all those other factors.

>>

>> His reputation was the total opposite of Keiko's.

>>

>> Niitsu Keiko always had been studious. She wanted nothing more than to be a doctor. She needed to be a doctor. So, she studied and worked at being the best at school. Nothing was going to stop her from her dream. She knew it would be a hard road to follow, but she wanted it more than anything. That didn't mean that she was shy or weak or anything. Just focused. She didn't intend to be distracted by anything or anyone.

>>

>> Until Seta Yuunosuke.

>>

>> She had stayed late after school, checking something out in the library. Night had fallen, but that never really worried her much. Their high school didn't have a gang problem or too many delinquents that went around harassing people.

>>

>> That night, it was a different story.

>>

>> "Ah, aren't you cute... Sailor suits look so good on little girls like you. Just makes me want to...rip it off."

>>

>> She turned to the voice. She wasn't about to take that crap. She wasn't just some silly school girl. Did he think he was scaring her? _Jerk!_ "Listen, asshole, I don't know who the hell you think you are, but why don't you just go to one of those clubs in the red light district that cater to freaks like you. I don't have time for your crap." She started waking away at a brisk pace.

>>

>> "Cutie, I'm not fuckin' around. At least not yet." For the first

time, Keiko felt a sliver of fear race down her back. This guy sounded serious. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to confront him.... He was right behind her.

>>

>> Keiko turned around and looked at him. He was big and ugly. And smelled of cheap liquor. She quickly memorized his facial features for future reference. The police would need some details when she reported his ass! He smirked at her scrutiny. "Ah, such a cute face. Maybe I'll keep you for a while."

>>

>> Keiko merely smiled back, despite her fear. Did he think that she was just an open target. He moved closer to her. He's probably thinking, _ Easy prey._ As soon as he got close enough, he would be feeling something different. Like a kick to the crotch.

>>

>> "Hope you enjoyed that," she retorted, running off. _ I have to lose him and call the police. Can't have a sicko like him running around. He might actually hurt someone. _

>>

>> She fled into the shadows. The darkness would help hide her until she could get to a phone with a description. Maybe the idiot would still be hanging around. Then the police could take care of him.

>>

>> A strong hand grabbed hold of her in the darkness. She was so surprised she couldn't scream. She could only gasp for air. She began to kick and struggle. No way was she going to let him get the upper hand.

>>

>> "Let me go!" She struggled, but couldn't break his strong grip. She turned around to slug him, but his other arm blocked her blow. Seta Yuunosuke.

>>

>> "What the hell is wrong with you?" Niitsu Keiko. She was in the same class as him. Got the highest grades. Incredibly intelligent. Cute as hell. Her dark hair framed a perfect, pale oval face, her lips a pale red. She would look like the ideal geisha if she dressed up in a kimono and the classic garb. She had that kind of quiet beauty. Not that she'd have anything to do with him or with any boy in the class. She always herself aloof. She was nice, but she basically ignored any overture from the opposite sex. He knew that several guys had already been shot down. Very gently, of course. Niitsu didn't want any of the guys to hate her, just to not like her _that _way.

>>

>> "God! I thought you were the sicko."

>>

>> "The sicko?"

>>

>> "There's some jerk out there. He tried to..." She shuddered. The adrenaline was wearing off, leaving her weak. She shook off the reaction. "I have to call the police. That guy is dangerous."

>>

>> "Cutie, you just don't know what's good for you." The both turned to the voice. The sicko was red with anger and not a little pain. Keiko was glad to see that he was walking funny. "I'm going to fix you up really good."

>>

>> "Hn. Old man, I think that you've made a mistake." He turned to Yuunosuke, seeing him for the first time. Then he didn't see anything. The sickening thud of flesh hitting flesh echoed in the

darkness. She shivered in the darkness. That move seemed so familiar. He way he walked. The way he talked. God. The dreams. "Kick him," he ordered roughly.

>>

>> "Huh?" She blinked owlishly at him. _Did he say to kick him?_

>>

>> "Kick him. Really hard. It will make you feel better." She looked like she was going to scream. Or cry. He didn't think he could handle either of those reactions. Her eyes were huge in her face. He had the urge to calm her. To hold her.

>>

>> Keiko looked at the unconscious body. She certainly didn't want him to be haunting her subconscious. She pulled back her foot and kicked him hard. "Oh...I do feel better."

>>

>> "Now we call the police," he said with satisfaction, dragging Keiko behind him.

>>

>> "Sagara Sanosuke couldn't have done it better," she whispered.

>>

>> He turned back to her in shock. _Megumi? _"No. No, he couldn't have."

>>

>> That day was the beginning of their relationship. Well, kind of....

>>

>> Keiko found it just as hard to believe as Yuunosuke that they were remembering some past life. But the memories were there, stronger now that they had met face to face, now that they had touched. But there was an attraction that they couldn't fight. Not that they didn't try. But how could you stop something that was just meant to be.

>>

>>

>>

>> _Niitsu Keiko._ He couldn't get that girl out of his head. He wished he could. The final bell had rung signaling the end of school. He watched her as she talked with some of the other girls from their class. The fall of rain outside muted the sound of students on their way home. There was just something about her.

>>

>> She was the complete opposite of him. She studied like it was the only thing that mattered to her in life. She followed all the rules. She was always on time. She always tried to be perfect. Like how she dressed, every button buttoned. Every hair in place. He had this depraved urge. He wanted to see her all mussed up.

>>

>> They fought. Every time they were alone, there was an argument. Over the stupidest things, too. Who cared about what teachers thought of him? Or what he did in the mornings that made him late all the time... He wasn't going to tell her that he helped his grandmother around their house every morning to make sure that she would be okay for the rest of the day. It was none of her business....

>>

>> Why did he keep trying to get her attention? Why couldn't he stop thinking about her?

>>

>> Keiko could feel him staring. She felt like she was under the watchful eye of a hunter. And he wanted to go in for the kill. That

was one of the reasons why she kept pushing him away. He was a factor that she could not control.

>>

>> But in the dreams....they had been happy together. Sanosuke and Megumi. Those two were just as opposite as she and Yuunosuke were now. But she didn't need complications. College exams were 2 years away. She had to prepare. Cram school and all of that. Who had time for a boyfriend? Not that she thought of him as a boyfriend or a potential one or anything. And they kept fighting, anyway. What kind of relationship could they have if they couldn't agree on anything?

>>

>> She looked up to see if he was still there, but he was gone. She fought down the twinge of disappointment she felt. He probably went home or went to check on whatever was making him late every morning. A girlfriend? Was she some girl who went to another school? Or maybe a college girl who liked handsome, young high school boys. Teaching him what she liked to do. She was not jealous. She wasn't! Who cared what he was doing or with whom? She didn't, that was for sure.

>>

>> She grabbed her book bag and walked down the corridor to the front of the school. The hallways were thinning out as students went home for the day. She had things to do. Books to read.... There wasn't any time in her life to think about bad boys like Seta Yuunosuke.

>>

>> But that bad boy had something else in mind for them. He had finally come to a decision. It was time to stop fighting it. She was his. He was hers. Nothing was going to change that. So why should they fight then enviable. It was time to give in. If it took some sneaky tactics, so be it.

>>

>> Keiko sighed as she walked to the front of the school. It was going to be a pain to walk home in the rain. Maybe she should stay and study in the library. Keiko opened the box that contained her outside shoes, absently reaching in. She found a note instead of her shoes.

>>

>> Niitsu, meet me in the gym. -Seta Yuunosuke.

>>

>> Of all the.... What the heck was he up to? She didn't have a choice but to go to the gym. She needed those shoes to get home in. _Damn it._

>>

>> "Seta-kun, where are my shoes? I need to get back home," Keiko yelled as soon as she entered the gym. It was empty, but a light was shining from the equipment room. Was he in there? "Seta-kun, I need my shoes!" No one was in the room. No one. What the hell was he up to? She was going to kill him when she got her hands on him.

>>

>> "Looking for these?" She swung around to face his voice. Seta Yuunosuke. He stood behind her, closing the door of the equipment room firmly behind him. He held the shoes up above her. There was no way that she would be able to reach them.

>>

>> She crossed her arms and glared at him. "Very mature, Seta. Are you going to give them back any time soon? I really don't have time for this."

>>

>> "Tell me something, Niitsu Keiko, why am I the only guy you talk to that way?"

>>
>> "What are you talking about? Stop being an idiot and give me back my shoes."
>>
>> "You talk to me as if you hate me with a passion. Tell me what you really feel about me."
>>
>> "What are you talking about? I just want my shoes. You'd be lucky if I ever talk to you again."
>>
>> "Hmm? I think that your hiding something. Come on, Megumi. Just give in. It takes too much energy to fight this. I'm getting tired."

>>
>> "Don't call me _Megumi._ I'm not her." If he was going to be so rude as to use her first name, he should at least use her real one. Megumi was in the past, if she really existed at all....
>>
>> "You are her. Stop lying to yourself. You can lie to other people, Keiko, but it's a real crime when you start lying to yourself."
>>
>> Keiko paled at that shot. "Are you delusional? Those are just stupid dreams."
>>
>> "I don't think that dreaming about the same thing is so common, Keiko." He moved closer to her. He had to make her see that it was better for both of them if they talked about what was going on between them. "Keiko."
>>
>> "How can it be real? It doesn't make sense. None of it." She shook her head in denial. No way were those dreams real. No way. It didn't make sense.
>>
>> "They were real. I checked." She raised an eyebrow at that. He could do research? "Hey, I know how to use a library. I'm not stupid."
>>
>> "I never said that you were. I'm just surprised you know how to research family history stuff."
>>
>> Yuunosuke shrugged. "I found out that the Sagara Sanosuke and Megumi live in Tokyo. They had a bunch of children. Megumi was a doctor, but you already know that. They still some Sagaras around Tokyo... In fact, doctors run in their family. "
>>
>> "That doesn't mean-"
>>
>> "It means what we've been dreaming is based in truth. We are remembering what happened to them. Everything is real. I even found an old article about Kamiya Kaoru's murder."
>>
>> "Kaoru's...." Keiko closed her eyes and saw the lifeless body of the young girl she had loved as a sister. Kamiya Kaoru....
>>
>> "It was real. It was all real. Keiko, why are you fighting it?"

>>
>> "It doesn't make sense to me. It's hard for me just to give into this."
>>

>> "It's real. I'm real." He pulled her into his arms. She went willingly, wrapping her arms around him. He felt so solid. Familiar. "Keiko, you need me and I need you. That's just the way it is. Stop being so stubborn and just give in."

>>

>> "You sure know how to put a romantic spin into things, Seta."

>>

>> He lifted her up on to the gymnastics horse gathering dust in the corner. Cupping her face in his hands, he kissed her softly. "You can call me Yuunosuke," he whispered against her lips. She sighed and pulled him closer, deepening their kiss. It was like coming home. How could she fight it? She never stood a chance.

>>

>> "I think I'd rather call you 'Yuu-chan,'" she whispered back, pulling him back towards her again. She had almost forgotten just how fun it was to kiss him. Knowing Yuunosuke, kissing was just the beginning.

>>

>> Of course, they both forgot about the basketball team. It was a good thing that the door of the equipment room was notorious for getting stuck.

>>

>> The resultant banging gave them enough warning to get everything back to a semblance of order. Of course, they couldn't hide the fact that they were alone in the equipment room for almost an hour. They may have been stuck there, but they never yelled for help or anything. They also couldn't hide that they were very red faced when the doors were finally opened. The school's rumor mills had processed the news of their relationship before the sun set that day, but Yuunosuke and Keiko didn't care. They found what they had each been looking for. And that hour in the equipment room was really quite worth it.

>>

>> "One track mind," she repeated, blushing. She hadn't thought about the infamous equipment room incident in a while.

>>

>> "What about the dreams?" he asked, returning to the topic at hand. Just this morning, they were talking about those dreams. Last night, they had another one.

>>

>> "I think we're going to find out why we're dreaming again."

>>

>> "You had a sudden urge to go back to our old high school cuz you have a feeling the answers are here?"

>>

>> "Yup." She smiled at him cheerily.

>>

>> "Wacky. You've always been wacky. You get these ideas in your head and figure that it has to be okay because you thought it up."

>>

>> "Yuunosuke, you have a better idea?"

>>

>> "Yeah, we could...", he wagged his eyebrows suggestively.

>>

>> "How would _that_ help? Come on! What do you think is happening?" She wagged her finger at him, tapping his nose in admonishment. He caught her finger in his mouth. "Why do you think we dreaming again?"

>>

>> "I dunno. Maybe it's just time."

>>
>> "The answer is here, Yuu-chan. I know it." He tucked a lock of hair behind her ear. Whatever was causing the dreams was back. Those dreams had brought them together when they were teens. Now the urgency was back. There had to be a reason for it all. If Keiko wanted to get to the bottom of it, he'd help her.
>>
>> "Okay, okay. Let's go."

* * *

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10. enter the players

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 10 - Enter the Players

>
>
>
> **Mirai No Yakusoku**
>
>
> Disclaimer: All rights and privileges to Rurouni Kenshin belong to Nobuhiro Watsuki, Shuiesha, Sony Music Entertainment, and associated parties. The characters of this series are used without his permission for the purpose of entertainment only. This work of fiction is not meant for sale or profit.
 This is my first attempt at the art of fanfiction. Please be gentle. Comments are greatly appreciated!!!
> Notes:
 The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. All the characters I create belong to me.
> Japanese Names:
(Sagara) Yuukiko = the characters of Brave + Child (Myoujin) Kakushin = Core/Heart
> (Seta) Yuunosuke = The character for Brave + nosuke ^.^
(Niitsu) Keiko = Graceful + Child
> (Same name as Megumi and Sano's youngest in RK: A New Era)
(Kamiya) Nozomi = Character for Hope
> (Yamamoto) Akira = Character for Light
Japanese Notes:
> Yakionigiri - Fried rice balls. Tasty. Yum!
 Kawaii - Cute

>Etto - Equivalent to: 'Um' in English.
> Shinai - A bamboo sword used in kendo.
 Eras of Japan - Pre-modern Japan was divided into several eras during Meiji. It was a way for Modern Japan to look at their past, but it is a very Western way of categorizing history. The various eras of Japan are Nara, Heian, Kamakura, Muromachi, Tokugawa, Meiji, Taisho, Showa and Heisei.
> Busu - Ugly woman. Hag.
> Yoroshiku - Means something like, I'm in your hands. You say it in greeting someone for the first time.
> Hajimemashite - lit. For the first time. It means: How do you do?
> Originally written in 25/99.

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>

> **Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 10 - Enter the Players **

>

>> Aya shifted restlessly at the booth. She blew a stray hair from her eyes and sighed. So far, nothing. _ And_ she was so bored she could cry. The others had gone off to get some food, leaving her to hold the fort. How long was it going to take for Rui to get some yakionigiri for her? She was hot, she was hungry, and she wanted something to happen. Anything. She sighed wistfully. She knew Yuuki-chan felt the same. She could see the frustration was building in her eyes. And no one wanted to get in Yuukiko's way when she was feeling frustrated. _That is_ so _Kaoru. Some things stay the same._

>>

>> Aya tried to alleviate boredom by looking at the crowds of people milling around. Their high school had a lot of alumni and it was a yearly tradition to go to this fair. A pair of preteens caught her attention. They looked like middle school kids. They were holding hands and whispering to each other quietly._ Kawaii_, Aya thought. _They must be couple!_ _They looked no more than 12 or 13. She sat up straighter as they turned toward the booth and began to approach it. They probably were going to ask for a love fortune or something. She shuffled the tarot cards she was holding expertly.

>>

>> "_Etto,_" the young boy came spoke first. He was still holding the girl's hand more than a little protectively. "We were wondering if you could tell our fortunes." The girl didn't speak. Her dark eyes were watchful, deep. She looked as if she was measuring her surroundings carefully. She met Aya's eyes and didn't look away. Aya felt a jolt. She had seen those eyes before. Where?

>>

>> "This is the History Club's booth?" she asked quietly. She reached over to thumb some of the books and artifacts (mostly from the dojo) they had brought with them.

>>

>> "Yes. You want your fortune read, right?" Aya asked, but they were ignoring her. The boy pulled the girl closer to him. She frowned up at him, but let him lead. The boy smiled and whispered something to her that made her eyes dance. They didn't answer her question and didn't seem to plan to anytime soon._ Then why did ya come over and say that you wanted me to do your fortunes?_ _She wanted to say something, but decided against it. She studied them surreptitiously.

>>

>> The boy was taller than the girl. His dark hair was the color of a mink. Deep brown-black. He was slim like a reed and was at that awkward, ready to grow at any second, stage, but he was very.... pretty. That was the only word that came to mind when she looked at him. The pair looked like they belonged together. Their body language was screaming familiarity. The way he was standing with the girl looked as if he was ready to protect her from anything that got too close. _Cute, _Aya thought. _A little chauvinistic..., but cute._

>>

>> The girl was petite. Her black hair fell down her back in a rich, dark curtain. Her eyes were intelligent as she flipped through books and looked at the swords and stuff from different periods they had brought in. She looked like she was going to be beautiful when she grew up.

>>

>> "The late Tokugawa period," she commented, lifting up a sword. Aya hurried over and took it from her. She didn't think children should touch things like that. Besides that, Kakushin's grandfather would probably kill them if it got damaged. The girl sniffed and fingered an aging shinai instead. "That's what you are concentrating on, right? That's why you are all dressed in Tokugawa period costume?" The kimono Aya was wearing didn't have to be considered 'period.' It was just a kimono. You couldn't really tell unless you studied the cut of the sleeves. It was a late Tokugawa...or early Meiji style. But how would a young girl know that? Recognizing styles took a lot of practice and study.

>>

>> "Actually, we were going for more of an early Meiji feel." Something flashed in her dark eyes for a second. The girl hid her expression so quickly that Aya wasn't sure if she really saw it.

>>

>> "Really? There was such a culture clash during that period. The West coming in and Japan grabbing anything Western and trying to assimilate it all at once...."

>>

>> "At least it's not Heian," the boy commented softly. "You know, women had to shave off their eyebrows and paint them in with ink..." He traced the girls eyebrows gently. She smiled softly up at him.

>>

>> "But Heian was so good for women. Lots of power," she reminded him.

>>

>> _Okay, enough is enough. I'm not here to listen to a history lesson. _Aya narrowed her eyes as she watched the pair. They had to know something. Aya followed her instincts, reaching out to grab the girls hand, concentrating. The girl tried to throw her off with surprising strength. Aya held on and felt the tingling sensation that she was looking for.

>>

>> "Dammit! Let go_, busu_!" the girl growled. "That feels weird as hell!"

>>

>> _Busu?! _There was only one person she remembered who would say....

>>

>> "Ya-Yahiko?" This delicate doll? "Y-You're YAHIKO?"

>>

>> "Yeah," she said sullenly. "Got a problem with it?"

>>

>> *****

>>

>> "We got to get back to the booth, Yuukiko."

>>

>> "I know, I know. I just wanted to take a break. So far, we've gotten nothing. Zip. Nada." She stopped to tighten her ribbon. The kimono was a bit heavy to wear at the beginning of summer, but an occasional cooling breeze alleviated most of the discomfort. She took out her fan and made use of it. _Okay, not most of the discomfort....

—

>>

>> "Have I told you that you looked wonderful?" he asked, giving in and planting a kiss on her lips. Distraction. She needed a little distraction. It was getting to all of them. But Yuukiko felt it the most because she was the most sensitive to the currents of emotion. Precenient or otherwise.

>>

>> "Hmm hmm. Stop trying to change the subject. You're not going to distract me so easily!"

>>

>> "Just making sure I told you. I wouldn't want to be one of those boyfriends who take their girlfriends for granted." As if he could. She had never been so happy as when she was with him. He looked great, too. He opted for the more formal attire than Kenshin would usually wear. The layers looked more authentic.

>>

>> "Yeah, well, I think you're trying to get my mind off our 'mission.' It's not working. Try something else." Yuukiko sighed. Kakushin touched her face, lifting her eyes up to meet his. He looked as if he could read her mind. Maybe he could, he knew her so well.

>>

>> "Something's going to happen. If not today, Yuukiko, then soon. Don't worry."

>>

>> "It's just that... I was hoping for more progress today." More than half the day had passed without any information coming in. It was really getting to her. She couldn't shake the feeling that something was going to go terribly wrong. Kakushin frowned and opened his mouth to reply.

>>

>> "Watch out!" a husky voice exclaimed. Yuukiko felt Kakushin grab hold of her before they toppled towards the ground.

>>

>> "Oro~"

>>

>> "Kakushin!"

>>

>> "Geez! I'm so sorry!" A pretty college student was standing over her, her cheeks flushed with embarrassment as she glared at the man with her.

>>

>> "Are you okay? Keiko-chan, you should be more careful!" The young man admonished with a grin. "You can't just run into people like that! Very bad manners."

>>

>> "_Me?!? _You're the jerk who was dragging me halfway across the yard. You made me knock into-" She finally turned to face the fallen couple. She fell silent as she looked at Yuukiko. Her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

>>

>> "Keiko?" Yuunosuke moved towards the couple on the ground and gasped with recognition.

>>

>> "Oh...God... Jou-chan?" His voice was horse with surprise. "You're really here. Ke-Kenshin?"

>>

>> "Oro~ Yuukiko, I can't breath."

>>

>> "Kakushin!" She quickly scrambled off him. She felt the young man grab her arms and pull her upright. Yuukiko's head was spinning. The pair in front of her.... It was no mistake. Megumi and Sanosuke.

>>

>> Keiko wiped the tears from her eyes. She was so happy. Kaoru. Kaoru was alive. And Kenshin. They had found each other. And he was oro-ing. She was sure she heard an 'oro.' _ Gods. _

>>
>> "Kaoru. Oh, Kaoru..." She hugged the girl to her.
>>
>> *****
>>
>> Aya studied the fairy-like girl before her, shaking her head. She looked as delicate as glass. But she still talked like Yahiko...chan. There was the same ready to take the world on attitude.
>>
>> "I am really a girl, I just have memories of being a boy, okay!" She looked like she was ready to fight over that fact. The boy, Akira, put his hand on her arm to calm her. For some reason, it worked.
>>
>> "Well, you see.... Nozomi and I found each other really early on. Ummm. We were in elementary school. Nozomi-chan got into a fight with a bully, of course."
>>
>> "And Akira was trying to stop the fight and resolve the situation. It would have been better to just let me fight and finish it." Akira tapped Nozomi on her nose and smiled down at her.
>>
>> "You would have gotten in trouble. Anyway, we've been best friends for so long. When we started to have these dreams, we...we just knew...."
>>
>> "Then, Akira, you're..."
>>
>> "I was...am Tsubame. _ Yoroshiku_," he bowed politely.
>>
>> *****
>>
>> "We better get back to the booth," Kakushin said, looking around at the thinning crowds. "Aya and Rui are probably wondering what happened to us."
>>
>> "So Misao and Aoshi are here, too. What about that bastard Saitoh? Man, he was a cold son of a-" Keiko elbowed him in the stomach before he could finish. He glared at his girlfriend, rubbing at his sore ribs. "Well, he was. Don't lie and tell me you didn't think so, too. You guys dressed up and did all of this stuff to try to find the rest of the gang?" Yuunosuke asked, scratching his head. Kakushin shook his head. Sano's personality really came through in this life.
>>
>> "It was a good idea," Keiko laughed. "You two look so... I felt like crying when I saw your face, Yuukiko. It's uncanny. You look so much like her."
>>
>> "You did cry," Yuunosuke reminded her. She stuck her tongue out at him. "Heh, women are so emotional."
>>
>> "Yuunosuke, you're such a punk," she shot back.
>>
>> "Whatever, babe. You like it." He leaned over and kissed her. Yuukiko and Kakushin looked at each other and began to laugh.
>>
>> "What?" he asked, grinning.
>>
>> "Nothing! It's just that you guys are so cute!" Yuukiko replied between giggles.

>>
>> "We always act like this." Keiko elbowed him again to make sure that he was going to behave.
>>
>> "I remember," Yuukiko laughed. The sound made the other three smile. It was Kaoru's laugh.
>>
>> Keiko stopped and looked at the other couple and smiled. "I'm so glad that you found each other."
>>
>> "There you guys are!" Aya yelled from the booth. Beside her Rui was talking to a pair of kids. "Get your butts over here! It's important!"
>>
>> They made their way to the booth. Yuukiko couldn't help staring at the kids at the booth. They had to still be in middle school. But that wasn't what was making her stare. It was the fact that the girls eyes were so.... Yuukiko ran over to the booth to make sure she wasn't going crazy.
>>
>> "Yahiko." She pulled the girl close to her and began to cry.
>>
>> "Ya-Yahiko?" Kakushin blinked and then smiled. He could see that the girl in Yuukiko's arms was trying with all her might not to cry, too, but failing at it. It was all Yahiko.
>>
>> "_Hajimemashite._ I'm Yamamoto Akira. And she's Kamiya Nozomi," the boy said politely.
>>
>> "Kamiya No...zomi?"
>>
>> "Yeah, funny how reincarnations turn out, huh?" Aya spoke from behind them. She looked liked so excited. Her eyes were glowing. "Yahiko and Tsubame."
>>
>> "Well," Kakushin started, "we have some people to introduce to you guys, too."
>>
>> "Seta Yuunosuke and Niitsu Keiko. The souls formally known as Sagara Sanosuke and Takani Megumi."
>>
>> "Is that everyone?" Nozumi asked from Yuukiko's arms.
>>
>> "Kenshin and Kaoru. Sano and Megumi. Aoshi and Misao. Yahiko and Tsubame. Is that everyone?" Kakushin shook his head. "I don't know. But.... I think we need to sit down and try to figure out why we're here."
>>
>> "Well, let's see, if all of us are here, then...."
>>
>> "Who else could have come back, too?"
>>
>> "Yeah.... Who else?" Yuukiko shivered and knew that none of them would like the answer to that question. Whatever the answer was.

* * *

> <p> <p>

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> Part 11<a>
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11. thoughts

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> This is my first attempt at the art of fanfiction. Please be gentle. Comments are greatly appreciated!
 Author's Notes:

> The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. All the characters I create belong to me. I began writing this in 1998! Um, that was before the end of the mangaTV series. I consider those as my main sources. I do not like the OAVs.

>

WARINING - KYOTO Spoilers! If you don't know the ending, um... I think I reveiled that one in this! It is not all that happy to begin with!

> Notes:
 The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. All the characters I create belong to me.

Originally written in 6/16/99.

> UPDATE: 0316/2005

Japanese Names:

> (Sagara) Yuukiko the characters of Brave + Child
 (Myoujin) Kakushin Core/Heart

> (Seta) Yuunosuke The character for Brave + nosuke .
 (Niitsu) Keiko Graceful + Child

> (Same name as Megumi and Sano's youngest in RK: A New Era)
 (Kamiya) Nozomi Character for Hope

> (Yamamoto) Akira Character for Light
 More Notes:

> Chibi - literally - small. Used here as a affectionate term, like

> "Kid."
 Shinai - A bamboo sword used in kendo.

> Busu - Ugly woman. Hag.

****HISTORY NOTE: ****Eras of Japan - Pre-modern Japan was divided into several eras during Meiji. It was a way for Modern Japan to look at their past, but it is a very Western way of categorizing history. The various eras of Japan are Nara, Heian, Kamakura, Muromachi, Tokugawa, Meiji, Taisho, Showa and Heisei.

* * *

><div class="center">Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 11 - Thoughts

> She should know better than that. When she smiled at him like that, he couldn't think. He couldn't help it. Every single time she turned toward him, he felt as if he was blindsided by her, hit with a Mack truck. Her smile. Her face. Her voice. <p>She was beautiful. Sagara Yuukiko. So beautiful... Just like in his dreams. He took a deep breath and forced himself to relax his fisted hands. God, he loved

the way her lips moved, the way she moved. He wanted to... He wished he could go up to her, to really speak to her. But he couldn't.<p>

_You're such a fucking _coward_. You can't even get the guts to talk to the girl-no _woman_ of your dreams. If you don't take this opportunity... Not only a coward, but a loser, as well. _ He took a step forward, shook his head and stepped back.

Yeah. He was a loser. Dammit! He should just go talk to her. It wasn't as if he was _ugly _or anything. And she knew him. She would just have to get use to thinking of him as more than... Oh hell, she'd probably be nice and talk to him for a while, then pretend that she has to be somewhere. Anything to avoid him.

She was so cute. So nice. So sweet. Throughout middle and high school, through all the time he had watched her, she had not once been attached to anyone. He closed his eyes and sighed. He had a chance. If he could just get the guts up, he could talk to her and she'd really like him. She would! And then... Maybe, just maybe, she was just waiting for someone like him to sweep her of her feet. Yeah. Maybe he could sweep her off her feet. Girls always were looking for a prince on a white horse, weren't they?

He could be that prince. He_ could_. Yeah, right. Yuukiko never really thought of him as more than a friend. Hell. She'd been barely speaking to him now. She was probably designating him one of those people you knew passingly in the halls. He clenched his fists at that thought.

He remembered the dream her had last night. The feel of her skin under his fingers. Running his hands through those long, dark locks. Tangling them in her hair. When he woke up, he could still feel her lips against his, could still taste her. Soft...lingering.

He sucked in a breath and took a step forward. He could talk to her. She was alone. No one was in the room. No one would know if he failed or not. Or if he made a total fool of himself. He watched as she gathered her books, mumbling to herself, brushing her hair off her shoulders in a way that made his heart ache. _So? What are you waiting for? Go talk to her! _ Okay. Okay. Okay... He sucked in a gasping breath to build his courage.

"Yuu-"

"Yuukiko, are you ready to go?"

"Oh, Kakushin." _Kakushin? _ He turned around to see a redheaded student enter the classroom. _Who the hell? _ He sat back down, watching as he walked with an easy grace. The intruder barely spared him a glance.

"Ready?"

"Yeah. I have everything." He watched in horror as his dream girl leaned forward and kissed the redhead lightly on the lips. The stranger reached out and brushed a lock of hair away from her face, as if he felt as comfortable with her body as with his own. Yuukiko smiled sweetly at him. The look in that guy's eyes... Who was he? _Yuukiko, you and... this guy...? _He prided himself on knowing most

of the students at school. This guy wore the uniform, but he didn't know him. How had a guy so new moved so fast?

He couldn't move, couldn't say anything as she walked away, the new student's arm holding her close to him. He felt the bile rise in his throat. _Yuukiko? You're supposed to be mine. You're waiting for me, remember? _ His dreams couldn't have been wrong. He clenched his hands, seeking control. He wasn't going to just let her go. Not again.

"What's wrong?" Kakushin asked, slowing down to look her in the face.

"Huh?" Yuukiko looked up blankly, shaking her head as if to clear it.

"You seem distracted."

"It's nothing..." Yuukiko pushed her hair away from her face distractedly.

"Yuukiko..."

"It's just..."

"Just?"

"We are doing the right thing, aren't we? There isn't something we aren't forgetting? Maybe all our fears are baseless. I feel like I'm jumping at shadows half the time." She reached over to gently trace the soft purple circles under his eyes. "You haven't been sleeping."

He caught her hand and held it to his face. "Hmmm."

"Kakushin, you'll burn out if you don't get rest. Regardless of what we were in our last lives...you're a teenager now. You have to rest."

"Yuukiko. There _is _something going on. I feel it, too. I think that the past is trying to catch up with us."

"Trying to catch up with us?"

"The events of the past few weeks amaze me. How could we find so many people from our past so quickly. Everything is happening at light speed. It doesn't feel right."

"Kakushin." Yuukiko reached down for his hand. She squeezed it softly. "No matter what... We're together. We've found each other. Isn't that worth something?"

"I intend to see to it that we stay together. Nothing is going to tear us apart." He brought her hand to his lips, kissing her palm softly. "Nothing."

"Nothing," she whispered back. "I won't let that happen, either."

There was just something so calming about cigarette smoke. The white

curling clouds touched something inside him. He flicked the burning bud downwards, crushing it beneath his foot lazily.

"You know, you're killing yourself slowly with those things, love."

At the sound of his companion's voice, he closed his eyes. He idly considering breaking up with her again. She was pushy and arrogant. But, then again, she had her uses. If only she would just keep quiet. It would be a lot better for both of them. They certainly didn't love each other. There was just something missing. "Hn. Living things start dying as soon as they're born."

Nami watched her lover smooth back his dark hair. He looked so chillingly elegant. At twenty-five, he was known as a shark when it came to business. He took no prisoners. Whatever he did, he achieved his goals. He was the cliché of the tall, dark and handsome stranger. Mysterious and brooding. Fascinating.

"What are we doing here?" Nami felt so uneasy in Tokyo. The decision to go was so sudden. And the dreams Rei had been having... They worried her more than she wanted him to know. Blood and death. He never really talked about it. But sometimes, in his sleep, he would call out. She could tell that he didn't want her here.

"You can do a bit of site-seeing, if you want. I have some business to take care of." With that, he turned and walked out of the hotel, into the crowd. His tall, lanky figure blended and disappeared.

Nami pushed back her long locks and pouted. "Well...whatever. Looks like I'm on my own. Again. Keep this up, big boy, and I'll get to thinking you don't want me around!" She sighed and looked around. "Well, at least I'm where I want to be." With that, she walked off towards the subways, towards the lights of Shibuya.

At Keiko's third sigh, Yuunosuke broke. He couldn't handle it anymore. "Stop complaining! We have to see if everything is up to speed," Yuunosuke growled at Keiko. The "History Club" was meeting at the dojo to see what they had going for them.

"I'm not complaining! I'm just thinking! Stop snapping at me. You've been acting like a wounded animal all week."

"Sorry, babe... I'm just worried. These are just kids. Heck, we can be barely considered to be adults. You think we can handle what's coming?"

"We may all be a bunch of kids now, but all of us have lived our lives through once before. We can take care of ourselves."

"Not Jou-chan, though," he reminded her softly. He remembered the dreams, the past when Kaoru had died before them. He still remembered the horror of seeing her lifeblood stain the ground. Kenshin's face contorted with pain and sorrow haunted him to this lifetime. They had all been so helpless. He cracked his knuckles and growled. "It's not going to happen again."

Keiko remained silent as she watched Nozomi enter the practice room. At Yuu-chan's words, her stomach knotted. _Again? It could happen again. _That was way too predictable, though. Why would they all be

reborn, just to watch the soul of one girl leave the earth again. No god would be that cruel.

"I hope she's ready for this," Nozomi said flatly as she walked to the center of the room. She was wearing traditional kendo gear, her shinai was balanced on her shoulder. "She hasn't exactly been practicing."

"You have, chibi?" Yuunosuke teased.

Nozomi looked back at him, her gaze unwavering. She smirked as she replied. "Before I knew who I was. I've always practiced kendo."

"Yup. Ever since I've known her. Nozomi has won championships," Akira added. He, too, was wearing hakama, the kimono tucked expertly in, folds precise. He carried a bokken and a shinai with noticeable ease. At Yuunosuke's questioning look, he grinned lopsidedly. "I've had a little training, too." He smiled softly at Nozomi. "Shall we do a warm up?"

"Sure."

Yuunosuke blinked at the sight of two middle school kids carrying themselves like well worn veterans. The pair moved into fighting stances. He recognized the positions. Kamiya Kasshin Ryu...? Hiten Mitsuryugi Ryu? Without waiting for a signal, the two began to go at it. They moved quickly across the room, every step smooth and graceful. They weren't even breathing hard. The only sounds were the soft slaps of bamboo on bamboo as the shinai met their marks. The pair fought as if they were dancing. They read each other and moved accordingly.

"Is that how kendo supposed to work?" he muttered to Keiko. The sound of wood striking against wood echoed across the room.

"I don't know. Whatever it is, those two are good." They moved smoothly, dodging each other's strikes or blocking them. It looked effortless. Nozomi stopped and ducked under Akira's strike. She winked at him, parried and thrust her shinai forward, knocking his out of his hands.

"We need new challengers anyway! We know each other too well," she said, pushing away her damp bangs from her forehead.

"I haven't beaten you, though," he grinned back.

"You were getting close," she said with a snort.

"You guys are really good." Keiko looked with wonder at the pair. "Really good."

Nozomi smiled. "Just something that we've always done. I hope that Yuukiko can--"

"Can what?" Yuukiko entered the practice room in full gear.

Keiko gasped. "She looks..."

"Uncanny, isn't it?" Aya followed behind as Rui and Kakushin brought

up the rear, carrying all sorts of weapons. " I think she looks the most like her past self out of all of us..."

Yuukiko stood in entrance of dojo. She shifted her feet, back and forth nervously.

"I can do this. I mean...maybe it's like instinctual. Kaoru studied. I remember Kaoru's life, so therefore..."

"Are you going to talk or are we going to get some practicing done?"

"Nozomi. You're still a brat, even after all these years."

"You haven't changed much either, _busu._" She said it with a soft smile. This felt so right.

"Yeah, yeah. Ready?" The younger girl grinned, adjusting her grip on the shinai.

"Are _you _ready? It's been a while, Yuukiko."

"Don't worry. I think I can handl-" Yuukiko dogged as Nozomi yelled her move. Yuukiko blocked the strike to her head and twisted in the air, landing on her feet.

"Ooh. Nice. You still have your reflexes."

"Nozomi! That was not-" Yuukiko dogged as Nozomi twisted, her shinai headed toward her face. She gasped, striking forward with her own bamboo sword.

"Yuukiko, if someone is going to attack you, they aren't going to announce themselves."

"Fine," she panted, adjusting her grip. "Let's play."

"Play? Yuukiko-ne-chan... There's nothing playful about this."

"I know." She knew more than anyone.

"I'm staying out of this one," Akira said, moving back as the girls began their fight.

"Good choice, kid," Yuunosuke agreed. "Wise not to get involved with a battle between two chicks. Never know when they'll turn on yo-"

"Better stop while you're ahead, Yuu-chan. Remember who you have to deal with later."

"Umm. Got it, babe."

"Good."

They watched as Yuukiko and Nozomi moved across the room. They moved fast and furious. There couldn't have been any time to think before each move, but every strike by Nozomi was countered by Yuukiko.

"She's doing really well for someone who hasn't picked up a shinai in her life," Akira commented as the pair moved across the room again. "But Nozomi is holding back."

"That's holding back?" Keiko gasped as she watched a particularly vicious swing aimed at Yuukiko's head. Yuukiko ducked and struck for Nozomi's leg, missing it by a hairsbreadth.

Rui and Kakushin just watched their technique as they fought relentlessly silently. Yuukiko remembered, all right. Her moves were getting faster, as if her body was waking up from a sleep, dormant and waiting for this moment to realize its full potential. Nozomi adjusted her technique accordingly, stepping up her strikes.

In kendo, you were supposed to call out where you were going to strike, but the girls were silent as Nozomi and Akira had been before. Yuukiko closed her eyes for a split second and then moved. Nozomi gasped as Yuukiko struck, pushing upwards against her and twisting. It was a basic Kamiya Kasshin Ryuu move that Kaoru had taught Yahiko so long ago. Nothing that was really all that devastating. It was just...

"I can't believe you pulled that one on me! That was so simple, I should have known better," she laughed, her eyes tearing a little. "Kaoru would... God," she whispered. "God..." Akira was behind her in a flash. She buried her face against his shoulder, breathing in his familiar presence. "It's just so hard..."

The shinai fell from Yuukiko's limp fingers. It was hard to fathom. Images of the past began to bombard her. She knew how to grip a shinai, how to execute a block, a strike... She had to only ask herself the question, what next, and she moved. Lord. She never knew that she could move like that. She didn't think, she just knew.

She felt, rather than saw, Kakushin beside her. He gently took her hand and squeezed. "This is supposed to happen, isn't it?"

"Yeah. We are doing what we can, Yuukiko."

"I knew what I was doing... inside. I just knew. Weird, huh?"

"Not so weird. I knew what I was doing when I saw you," he said lightly.

She laughed at that. "You're just trying to make me forget that I feel all weirded out. That was weird, too."

"But right. Whatever's going on, everything will be all right."

Yuukiko took a deep breath and turned to the others. "Okay. Who wants to try to remember their battle moves next?"

Yuunosuke punched his right fist into the palm of his left hand and grinned. "You know... This is going to be fun."

"_Tako_. You always-"

"Exactly babe!" Yuunosuke interrupted Keiko with a quick kiss to her mouth. "Let's get it on. I'm thinking that we all still need some

practice and the dojo is free for the rest of the day,
so..."

"Yuunosuke is right. We should focus," Rui said softly. "Aya? You come with me. We're going to see how much ninja we still have left in us."

"Um... Honey? How are we going to do that?"

He grinned softly at the woman he loved for more lifetimes than he could count. "Looks like we practice."

"I'm not jumping a tree. This body hasn't been doing any of those ninja tricks for--"

"Don't worry, I have a feeling that we've got more in us that you think." He pulled her close to him and whispered in her ear. "It's always been in us. You'll see."

"I'd like to take the time to remind you that gravity, et all, are forces that we can't play with."

"Have more confidence in yourself. Guys? Aya-chan and I are going out for a little practice of our own. We'll be back."

"They better not be going out to neck."

"YUUNOSUKE!" Keiko jabbed him in the stomach.

"Well...it wouldn't be fair!"

"Who's going to go against you, Kakushin?"

"Someone's going to turn up."

"Someone?" Yuukiko asked softly.

"I'm sure of it..." Kakushin replied with a soft smile.

"AAACCCHHuuuu!" Rei rubbed his nose thoughtfully. Funny, he didn't feel a cold coming on, though. He shrugged and continued to walk along the crowded Tokyo streets. The answers were here. He felt it. Maybe he could finally put a stop to the damn dreams. If he could find the key...

_What about Tokio? Do you want to find her? _

He shook his head. Dreams were only dreams. The faded memories were nothing to him. He just wanted them to stop, so he could get on with what he needed to do in life.

Nothing else mattered. Nothing.

12. dark hand

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 12 - Dark Hand

> **Mirai No Yakusoku**

>
>
> Disclaimer: All rights and privileges to Rurouni Kenshin belong to Nobuhiro Watsuki, Shuiesha, Sony Music Entertainment, and associated parties. The characters of this series are used without his permission for the purpose of entertainment only. This work of fiction is not meant for sale or profit.
 This is my first attempt at the art of fanfiction. Please be gentle. Comments are greatly appreciated!!!
> Notes:
> The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. . . . All the characters I create belong to me.
>Japanese Names:
> (Sagara) Yuukiko = the characters of Brave + Child
 (Myoujin) Kakushin = Core/Heart
> (Seta) Yuunosuke = The character for Brave + nosuke ^.^
 (Niitsu) Keiko = Graceful + Child
> (Same name as Megumi and Sano's youngest in RK: A New Era)
 (Kamiya) Nozomi = Character for Hope
> (Yamamoto) Akira = Character for Light
 (Sagara) Mai - written as Truth and Only
> (Sagara) Sou - written as ConceptIdea
> (Sagara) Fumi - written as Sorcerer and Beauty.
 (Myoujin) Yutaro - written as A Reason, Many, Sons
>Japanese:
 Iinazuke - FiancÃ©(e)
>Yoko-chan (ardith@hanabatake.com)
 http://www.hanabatake.com
>
>
> **Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 12 - Dark Hand**
>
>> The dojo looked as it always did. It seemed to be an oasis in the desert of the city. It was like stepping into the past in so many different ways. Sagara Mai had been here before. When she was the best friend of certain young heir to the dojo.
>>
>> _
>>
>> Oh, Yutaro. I'm so sorry you never saw our children's happiness.
>>
>> _
>>
>> Her daughter must have been stunned to learn that she had been allowed to stay over at the dojo. She, herself, had stayed many a night. Yutaro had been such a good friend. And Kira. He loved her so much. They had been inseparable. But they had moved away. Time and life took over and she did not see them againâ€|until it was too late.
>>
>> _
>>
>> Our children found love, Yu-chan. Do you see how happy they are?
>>
>> _
>>
>> When Yutaro's mother called, she was taken back to her girlhood. She spoke with Myoujin-jisan and they all came to the same realization: this was meant to be. Sou had to be convinced, of course. Her husband did not believe in fate so much. He did, however,

trust his private investigator reports. Because it made their little girl happy, the last few weeks they had let their only child luxuriate in the wonders of true love. They stayed out of the way and made few phone calls. They let her spend the weekends over at the dojo. Mai trusted the pair. There was something special about them. And Yuukiko had never been so happy. But enough was enough. There were decisions to be made. And the guardians had to come to it.

>>

>> Mai forced her husband to take a day off. They had spent a wonderful afternoon with Kakushin's grandparents, Myoujin Kenji and Kasumi. They waxed poetic over their beloved grandson and spent time talking about the past and the future. And after over a month of Yuukiko living practically living in the dojo, it was time to make a decision about that future.

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Yuukiko pushed back her heavy hair, partly in frustration, partly from habit. Kakushin could see that see how much it was eating at her. He wanted to comfort her, but couldn't find the words. They were dealing with vague fears. Night terrors. How could he sooth what was so intangible?

>>

>> "Yuukikoâ€|," he began.

>>

>> She grimaced at the hesitancy in his voice. She didn't mean to take it out on him. "Sorry. I hate this. I hate not knowing." She turned to him when he tugged her hand gently. He smiled and kissed sweetly. "Oh. That was nice. You wouldn't be trying to make a girl forget her problems, would you." She leaned closer to deepen their embrace.

>>

>> "I can see how that skill can be useful, darling. Looks like your young man has a certain gift for it," murmured a husky voice from the direction of the doorway.

>>

>> "Mom?" Yuukiko stopped mid-smooch, pulling back and turning on her heel, only to lose her balance, almost tripping on her face. Kakushin grabbed her shoulders before she could fully fall over. "D-D-Dad?"

>>

>> "Ah, Yuuki-chan. We were just having tea. This would be your young man. Hello. My, but I do see a lot of Yutaro-kun in you." Mai rose gracefully from her kneeling position. She sensed her husband rise behind her.

>>

>> Perfect. It was going to be perfect.

>>

>> If there was anything that Mai knew, it was that he was a good man. Some of the unease she had been feeling eased at the sight of his warm gaze. He politely bowed. Graceful, she thought with a smile. He was very handsome, almost to the point of being pretty. She could see how her daughter could be so besotted so quickly.

>>

>> _

>>

>> Ah, Yutaro. He has grown up to be quite a man.

>>

>> _

>>

>> "How do you do, ma'am? I'm Myoujin Kakushin," Yuukiko's young man

introduced himself prettily with another bow.

>>

>> Yuukiko's parents introduced themselves. "I have heard so much about you from Yuukiko and your grandparents. I'm glad that we could finally meet."

>>

>> Mai was strikingly beautiful. She smiled with the same smile as Yuukiko. She winked when she caught him staring. He blinked and blushed. Kakushin shook his head, swallowing a chuckle. "You knew my father?"

>>

>> Mai laughed. The sound made him smile, reminding him, again, of Yuukiko. "I went to high school with him and your mother. We lost touch in college. All that drinking and partying makes you lose track of time and other things. Those were the daysâ€|" she sighed with wistful nostalgia.

>>

>> "Mom!"

>>

>> She ignored her daughter's outburst blithely. "And then, he and your mother moved. I always meant to get in touch with them again. He was quite a man." She smiled, thinking of the past. She sighed, the smile turning sad. "I'm sorry that they gone. Your parents were good people."

>>

>> "Yes. The best." Kakushin blinked, and shook his head as if to clear it.

>>

>> Yuukiko sighed. Poor Kakushin. Nothing can quite prepare you for Sagara Mai. Her mother was beautiful. And charming and oh so caring (read nosy). The combination made people's head spin. Most of the time, she wasn't aware of her affect on people. When one is born so beautiful and charismatic, one must adapt. When one was the daughter of someone so beautiful and charismatic, one learns to adapt as well.

>>

>> "Well, we were going to study, but if you are heading back I'll just go home with you two." She walked up to kiss her mother on the cheek.

>>

>> "No need, darling. Your father and I have spoken with Myoujin-san. This has gone on long enough" Her mother that "I-know-what's-best-for-you" look in her eyes. Yuukiko waited for the ax to fall. "We've decided that it would be best if you move in here. As iinazuke, of course."

>>

>> "I-I-Iinazuke?" Yuukiko gasped. Definetly not what she was expecting. "A-Aren't you going a little fast?"

>>

>> "No." She smiled at her little girl. "Actually, I recall a pact I made with Yutaro about our children. You could even say, we betroved you two before you were even born."

>>

>> "Mo-th-er." The rush of frustration flushed her cheeks. "What are you talking about?"

>>

>> "I'm just saying that it was something we talked about. I have had enough conversations with Kakushin's grandparents to know what is going on here. And I was young once, too."

>>

>> "Mom, you couldn't have been more than 17 when-"
>>
>> "Darling, it was even before that. We decided this when we were in grade school. Ah, how were we to know that our children would be so perfect together? Well, being so wonderful ourselves, how could they not be?"
>>
>> "Umâ€¦" Kakushin didn't know what to say. Yuukiko's parents were larger than life to say the least.
>>
>> Sou sighed as he saw the dazed confusion in Kakushin's eyes and sympathized completely. "Mai has that affect on people," he explained. "Everyone knows that. She should have a warning lable or something."
>>
>> "Mai-chan has always been a charmer," Kakushin's grandfather announced to the room at large. "I'm glad a daughter of hers will be in the family."
>>
>> "Yes, my dear. And it was wonderful to talk to you after so long. It's been years since you've come by." His grandmother smiled benignly at Mai. She had always been a vivacious girl.
>>
>> "The reason you have been being so cool about letting me stay over is because you knew the Myojins? You...you- Wait a minute. Did you just sayâ€¦? Kakushin, th-th-they've just d-d-d-decided thatâ€¦"
>>
>> "I would be honored if you would allow me to eventually marry Yuukiko. I love her and she is a wonderful person."
>>
>> Sou nodded. Of course, he already had Kakushin checked out. His detectives found nothing wrong with him. He was perfect for his only child. Even his cynical little sister would agree that something about the pair was right.
>>
>> "Welcome to the family, son."
>>
>> "Wait! Don't I have something to say about this?" Yuukiko was turning a pretty pink with frustration.
>>
>> "Do you have anything you want to add, darling?"
>>
>> "Yes, Yuuki-chan." She looked at her father and mother and saw the approval in their eyes. She sighed and gave in. It felt right anyway.
>>
>> "Only that I love Kakushin. Thank you for everything. We aren't going to marry any time soon, of course. We are much to young. After schoolâ€¦" Mai patted her cheek and smiled mistily.
>>
>> "That's my little girl. It's right. Nowâ€¦" she sniffled. "You two go up and study."
>>
>> Sou smiled at his daughter. Yes, she would be safe with this one. That reminded him. "Oh yes. Yuuki-chan. Fumi-chan is in town."
>>
>> "Aunt Fumi?" His father's half-sister was only 10 years older than she was. She grew up in America and was an agent of Interpole to boot. Yuukiko could only imagine what kinds of adventures and excitement she had. She was not allowed to talk much about that part

of her life.

>>

>> "We won't be able to see her till after her case is finished, though. We will have a little party then," Mai said. "Until then, you two go study. We grown-ups will arrange everything else."

>>

>> "Ah, remember when we used to study, Mai?" Memories of college danced in his head. Mai was often inspired when reading for classes.

>>

>> "Do I ever. That reminds me. Children, remember to play it safe. You are young yet!"

>>

>> "MOTHER!"

>>

>> "Of course," Kakushin replied at the same time, grabbing Yuukiko's hand, he led the retreat to his room.

>>

>> "Yuukiko, I love your parents. They are fantastic."

>>

>> "Then may God help you when you meet my aunt."

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Sagara Fumi crossed and uncrossed her legs, swinging her feet in time to her own personal rhythm. Casual observers would look and see what they wanted to see: a teenage girl, alone and possible on the make for an older sugar daddy. Not an uncommon sight nowadays, Fumi thought cynically. Materialism was all the rage. They would never think that she was quite of age and packed heat in her small leather school bag.

>>

>> She rubbed her face, trying to conjure some more energy from the friction. She wasn't getting enough sleep lately. This case was giving her nightmares. And if they weren't the night terrors, the visions that she had were something else. She pushed away from the memories of the other dreams, trying to concentrate on the problem at hand. Young girls kidnapped. Drugged. Raped. Made into virtual slaves. Murdered. There were whispered rumors in the shadows. Tendrils of fear marked the air, yet the restless still came out to party. The young were invincible. Always.

>>

>> But she didn't really blame them. Sometimes it was the only way to cut loose from the stress and pressure of school. But if you cut too loose, you paid a high price. They should take less risks with what they didn't want to lose.

>>

>> Two girls had been found so far. It hurt to get too close, to find out about their lives. Hell, they were as old as her niece was. The world made her so sick sometimes. That there were people who could cut the lives of children so short. So many others had gone missing. That was why they were called in. This had to be stopped. And nothing had worked before.

>>

>> She couldn't hide from the images of those girls, slashed. Left to bleed, to die in a quasi-ritualistic offering. Their bellies were slashed. They died watching their innards pour out of them. They must have felt the burning pain of the sword as it sliced through their delicate skin. The carnage was horrific.

>>

>> She scanned the area again, adjusting her schoolgirl skirt and straightened her ponytail. One of the reasons she was assigned to this case was that she looked like a teenager. Bait. Jailbait, she thought with a mental sneer.

>>

>> One could only hope. She'd like to bait some of these sick bastards into jail.

>>

>> Shibuya was a tangle of sight and sound. The flashing lights of the arcades clashed with the jangle of people. Girls, hair streaked to blond-brown, skin tanned, balanced gracefully walked on ridiculously high-soled boots. Trends were set in Shibuya, in the glare of electronics and style. But Fumi was not interested in any of that. She only wanted to do her job and get out. For that single-mindedness, some called her a bitch. Or frigid. That only made her laugh. As if those insults would cause her to change, or fight back. She merely ignored and pressed on.

>>

>> As a college student, she had been recruited by Interpole. This was mostly for her skills with what some would term as deadly arts. Her reflexes were awesome. And her intelligence was bar none. She allowed herself to be recruited because she thought she could help, at least a little. It opened her eyes to the horrors of the world. The vulnerability. Maybe it would hurt, but she had to care. She hid how everything effected her, but she felt it all the same. If she didn't, she would become as hard as some of the monsters out there.

>>

>> She swallowed, remembering her dream. Was he a monster? Whoever he was, she wanted to find know more.

>>

>> _

>>

>> Get a grip, Fumi. It's only a dream.

>>

>> _

>>

>> But some how, rationalizing did not comfort her.

>>

>> Dreams were a funny thing. Vague images faded into the night, insubstantial as mist. Yetâ€|.

>>

>> The left hand of darkness loomed ahead. Reaching out gently. Touching softly. His handâ€|touching every so lovingly. She could smell him on her when she woke up. When she woke up, she remembered him with every breath. The mix smells of tabbacco and male drifted to her from the recesses of sleep.

>>

>> He was out there. Looking for her. Waiting for her. She didn't know whether to run and hide or to stalk back. Something within her was urging her to reach out for him.

>>

>> _

>>

>> Damn it! Don't think about it. Don't. You're working anyway.

>>

>> _

>>

>> Fumi surreptitiously stretched, bringing more attention to her chest. She lazily uncrossed her legs, scanned the night and

waited.

>>

>> *****

>>

>> He dreamt of blood. The tasteâ€¦ The sticky, warm feel of life, flowing out, flowing on, made him mad. He could smell it in the darkness. The blood called to him. In his mind, she became mixed up with the blood.

>>

>> He opened his eyes, staring out into darkness. In the night, the moist heat of the oncoming summer hung in the air, but he felt cold. He needed to be warm.

>>

>> She _can make you warm_.

>>

>> Yes. Just take. Then you can find happiness.

>>

>> _Was it her time?_ The other girls were just a prelude to his ultimate conquest. He wanted her so bad he could taste it. Her. _Her blood._

>>

>> Oh yes. It was time to hunt.

* * *

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13. hunter

Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 13 - Hunter

> **Mirai No Yakusoku**

>

>

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 This is my first attempt at the art of fanfiction. Please be gentle. Comments are greatly appreciated!!!

> <pont> Notes:
 The title means "Future's Promise" in Japanese. . . . All the characters I create belong to me.

><pont>Japanese Names: <pont>
 (Sagara) Yuukiko = the characters of Brave + Child

> (Myoujin) Kakushin = CoreHeart

> (Seta) Yuunosuke = The character for Brave + nosuke ^.^

(Niitsu) Keiko = Graceful + Child

> (Same name as Megumi and Sano's youngest in RK: A New Era)

(Kamiya) Nozomi = Character for Hope

> (Yamamoto) Akira = Character for Light
 (Sagara) Mai - written as Truth and Only

> (Sagara) Sou - written as ConceptIdea

> (Sagara) Fumi - written as Sorcerer and Beauty.
 (Myoujin)

Yutaro - written as A Reason, Many, Sons

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> <div class="center"> <pont>Mirai No Yakusoku: Part 13 - Hunter

>

>> Dammit, her teeth were beginning to hurt.

>>

>> It could be from the smiling. Then again, it could be from an almost uncontrollable desire to grind them. She thought that demonstrated incredible control by not going mad after so many hours. If she smiled at another salary-man, she swore she was going to scream. Fumi stifled a sigh of frustration and then a yawn of boredom. She wanted nothing more than to take a hot bath and to get some sleep. _How do these kids survive on this much sleep? Don't they have school in the morning? The streets were filled with people and music. _

>>

>> She tapped her foot as she heard Judy and Mary's _Daydream_ fill the air. She closed her eyes and listened to the bittersweet words. There was nothing like a little JAM to make you happy. Yuki's high voice drifted over her making her smile, though she was more than a little frustrated. She had wasted half the night for nothing. Not even a nibble. No one on the street was talking about the murders. It was as if no one was even paying attention. Not to the dead girls. Not to her. And they were running out of time.

>>

>> She sighed in relief when a voice in her ear warbled flatly stating that the stakeout was over for the night.

>>

>> "Okay. See you tomorrow night," she whispered to the watchers as she gathered her stuff to leave. She would just have to try again. The girls who had died needed her to help them. The bastard had to go down. The profilers said that he probably stalked his victims in Shibuya in some social situation, luring them away from the lights and then torturing and killing them. He was smart, brilliant really. Yeah. The man was fucking brilliant, but also fucking mad. But no matter how mad he was he left no evidence. Only the pattern of the killings linked them together. He was brutal, cruel and cold. And every time he killed, he left a message: I am waiting. I am watching. You will be mine. _Sick son of a bitch. _

>>

>> Interpol had been brought in because the pattern matched a pair of murders in the US a while back, almost exactly. Down to the lack of evidence to link anyone. No DNA or traces were left. It looked like someone got tired of working the murder thing in the States and decided to try it here. The US case had assumed that he was a male, young and probably white. But since the murders started happening in Japan, they began to reexamine the case. So far, the only thing they knew was he liked young girls with black hair. The girls who disappeared were last seen in Shibuya. None of them had colored their hair in the popular tea washes, but left them traditionally long and black. By all accounts, they were nice girls. Shibuya must have been adventures for them. Maybe they wanted break from studying, time away from home. They ended up dead. It pissed her off because they were so young.

>>

>> That was the reason that she was chosen for this assignment. She fit the bill of the type of girl the wacko liked. And she was half Japanese, so she fit in. She was thankful that her mother's hair was

black, too. Her looks were slightly exotic, but not enough to make one think she was not fully Japanese right away. She had spent the evening wandering the streets, looking for information and being hit on by the local (and not so local) Romeos. Though there was little chance of someone actually snatching her, she may get to find out something that could break open the case.

>>

>> She tucked a strand of long hair behind her ear and looked around as people rushed passed her. She knew she caught the eye of some. Her features were too striking to go unnoticed. She smiled and tilted her head, glancing at her trendy Japanese watch now and then. Blend in and find out what you can. She had been doing her best, but so far there was no word on the street, no warning or caution amongst the youthful creatures of Shibuya. _The young always think they will live forever. _

>>

>> "Little girls like you shouldn't be wandering out at night. It might be hazardous to your health." She wanted to jump, but pushed herself for control. The voice came from the shadows, cultured and cool. A curl of white smoke lazily floated from the dark, then the burning tip of a cigarette.

>>

>> _Ooh, finally a pervert comes out. You would think in this area of town, more sickos like him_ would approach her. "What's life if you don't take risks, mister," she said coolly. She didn't really want to play this game right now. Fumi just wanted to leave. She was sick and tired of all this crap.

>>

>> "Dark things go on in the night, little girl." Was he just a perv or was he the killer? She couldn't see him. As if he could sense her frustration, he stepped out into the light.

>>

>> She couldn't breath. He was....

>>

>> _Get a grip, Fumi. Those are just dreams. _

>>

>> Rei watched the color drain and flow back into the girl's face. Girl? No, she was older than the schoolgirl uniform led a person to believe. Her eyes, her lack of innocence, of naiveté, showed her to have much more experience than a schoolgirl would. Her lighter hazel-green eyes marked her as _happa_. As he watched her from the darkness, he had thought of her as striking. He reassessed his opinion upon closer inspection—she was beautiful.

>>

>> "Hmmm, not a little girl after all...." He knew her. She was the one. His only. He felt the pull, the recognition. "Tokio..." he rasped, his voice was a harsh whisper in the night. This was no dream. He knew this woman. He knew her smell. Her voice. Her attitude. The past and the present suddenly came into sharp focus. He closed his eyes and accepted his fate. His hand was shaky as he took a slow drag off his cigarette.

>>

>> She, of course, had different ideas. "Yeah. This is Tokyo. Shibuya," she shot back, purposely changing her accents to a more rough, boyish style that went along with her aloof schoolgirl image. "Need directions? The train station is over there." No way was that whispering voice familiar. No way.

>>

>> "You're Tokio." Ah, you were always the more pragmatic one, love, he thought, anticipating her answer. His heart ached as she bit her

lip and tucked her hair behind her ear. Tokio.

>>

>> "Mister, I don't know what you are talking about. I got a name, and Tokio ain't it. And if you haven't heard, smoking is bad for your health." She shifted her legs, pulling her bag closer in an artless schoolgirl gesture. He saw her twist her fingers nervously. Habits she couldn't shake in a thousand lifetimes. He had found her.

>>

>> "No," he mused, putting out the cigarette. "Of course it's not Tokio. That's no more your name than if mine were 'Hajime.'" He watched her color flow back and forth. She could never hid from him. "How about if I buy you a drink and tell you about my dreams?"

>>

>> She didn't resist as he took her hand and lead her into the night.

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Silver sliced through the darkness. Yuukiko stood silent, watching. _Battousai. _His eyes were yellow. He held a katana in his hands. The blade was wickedly sharp. Kakushin.

>>

>> "I won't let anything happen to you. Not again. I can't lose you again." He reached out for her, but the room turned black. She could see nothing. She could only hear the screams. Smell the coppery essence of blood. She did not move, but waited, listening. In her heart she knew the truth. She closed her eyes and waited for the pain.

>>

>> _____

>>

>> Kakushin woke with a start. Yuukiko was in his arms, spooned against him, but she was not asleep. Tension radiated from her. He wasn't surprised. The past few weeks hadn't been easy. He felt her sigh and relax against him, sinking into him.

>>

>> "I can feel him, Kakushin. He's waiting out there. I think that this time, whoever is out there is much less stable than anyone we dealt with in Meiji."

>>

>> "Yuuta." He remembered the madness in Yuuta's eyes, those final deadly seconds, the madness that cost him Kaoru.

>>

>> "Yuuta?" She could feel the hot-cold slice of metal cutting her flesh. Death.... You could die in your dreams and still wake up. She didn't plan on feeling death that way again. She didn't know if it was him again, or part of him, or just some dark evil. "Kakushin. I want this to stop. I don't know how many chances we get to be together. I have a feeling that we have used a lot of them up before. We have to end this."

>>

>> "Yuukiko, what happened in your dream?" He turned so that he was above her, looking down at her face. In the pale light of the moon, her face was washed white. Her dark eyes looked lost. He wanted to hide her away, protect her. He reached out and smoothed her hair as much to sooth himself as Yuukiko.

>>

>> "The dream? What happened?" She suddenly felt so groggy, as if she could not pull herself out of the darkness. "I-I died. I've died so many times, Kakushin. I saw.... I died in Heian. I was a concubine to

a prince. He killed me when I tried to protect my lover. My childhood friend. My servant." Yuukiko kissed him softly on the cheek.

>>

>> "I was an empress during the Taika era. I died in battle against a warlord. My loyal general at my side. My son... ruled after me. I died so many times in Kamakura. I was a samurai wife, daimyo's daughter, peasant farmer, prostitute. Every time, I was your lover. There were battles and wars. Instability. Love." She snuggled closer to him. "Kakushin, every other time I have lived, you were there. Every other time, you died or I died. Or we died together. There is a reason that we are together. We belong, but there is someone out there who exists only to destroy us."

>>

>> "So he is out there because even though he has lived so many lives, he still has not accomplished what he needed to do. He destroyed us, but that did not get him peace. That did not let him go on."

>>

>> "Yes. He can't let go yet." Yuukiko sucked in a shuddering breath. "He can't let go."|."

>>

>> "I won't lose you again. I'm tired of this, Yuukiko. No way am I going to let you go. Remember, if you die, I follow you this time."

>>

>> "That's stupid, Kakushin. Don't even say that."

>>

>> He tightened his hold on her, breathing in her smell, her warmth. "Remember, I will follow you this time. I can't do this again," he repeated. The firmness in his voice made tears spring to her eyes.

>>

>> Stupid. So stupid and stubborn. She loved him so much it hurt. "Then I better not die," she whispered unsteadily. She tried to shake off the feeling of foreboding her dreams left her. "I don't plan on it this time. We have a better advantage. Knowledge is power."

>>

>> Kakushin kissed her, pulling her close to him. He needed her to be with him. It hurt so much to know that he lost her so many times. "Yuukiko?"

>>

>> "I know." She kissed him lingeringly, trying to drive the demons away. Empress, lady, whore. No matter what she was in those lives, she had love. She had him.

>>

>> *****

>>

>> She wasn't there. She had escaped from him. Again. She would pay for that.

>>

>> _No more. You will be mine. You will be. But for now, you will have to suffer. You have to know that I'm waiting. Watching. You.

—

>>

>> _We belong together. My beloved. Oh, love. Everything I do is for you. Everything. How could you turn away? How could you leave me?

—

>>

>> He left the room, silent as the night, and turned off the light. The voices in his head were hardly satisfied. Not enough. Not nearly

enough. But soonâ€¦. He shuddered as he felt the hunger wash over him again. He would have to search for something to take the edge off.

>>

>> _I wait for you. _

>>

>> Soon. Soon, he would find peace. Until then, he would try to find ease. He walked out into the night.

>>

>> _____

>>

>> "Sagara Fumi." Rei said her name as if he tasted it, savoring each syllable. Savored it even though it made him smile ironically that she carried the blood of the man he had mocked unmercifully all those generations ago. _Looks like you did do some good,_ Aho. His dark eyes studied her face, as if trying to figure out all her secrets. It bothered her that he might just be able to. He was just following his instincts now. "Do you normally dress like a Japanese Lolita? I know that there are guys out there who get off on that." He said it with a mocking smile.

>>

>> "Oh yeah, I enjoy the perverts trying to stick their hands up my school uniform." She smiled when he frowned at the image, as if there was a possibility that she was telling the truth. "No. I'm not into that sort of thing."

>>

>> "Then why the costume? You certainly are not in high school." She didn't answer. Instead she took another sip of coffee and smiled. He narrowed his eyes, but did not peruse the subject. The answers would come in time.

>>

>> The coffee shop was small, clean and quiet. It was somehow a separate world from the chaos outside. Or it could be the man she was with. But she did not want to think about that. Not yet.

>>

>> The coffee was hot, if not a bit pricey, and tasted wonderful. She sighed as she took a sip of the coffee. She loved the rush of caffeine, the ringing in her blood. After spending most of the day trying to be bait, she definitely could use the break. And after her dreams, she could not stop herself from listening to her compulsion to follow this man. _Fine time to go an have a nervous breakdown, Fumi._ She must be going crazy. And it was the fault of those damn dreams. Hell, she didn't even know why she was in the shop, with a virtual stranger. It didn't make sense. It wasn't like her. She studied him surreptitiously. His movements were swift and compact. As if he thought about every move before he made it. _Rei. His name was Uchida Rei._

>>

>> She openly studied the man who had quietly took her hand and brought here. He was handsome. And, she admitted to herself, fascinating. His dark eyes broodingly sharp and lips sculpted to look beautiful and hard. She wondered idly if they would soften as they kissed.

>>

>> He sipped his coffee casually, bringing attention to those lips, as if he knew where her thoughts ran, before he began. His eyes glinting with laughter and something else. "You look like you are waiting for me to grow fangs. I don't bite... hard." She blushed at the glint in his eyes. "As well you know, my love."

>>

>> She didn't pretend not to understand. "Listen, those are only dreams. Dreams don't mean anything. People dream all the time."

>>

>> "But do they meet the person of their dreams?" He smiled crookedly. He watched her face, the emotions. He had dismissed his dreams as fantasies, half remembered in the night. But when he saw her, when he touched her, he knew that what was between them was real. "You know the truth. Can't you accept it?"

>>

>> She wagged her finger at him and began, "Ha ha, you're-" She didn't finish the thought. He pulled her towards him and kissed her. She sighed and surrendered for a moment. The images began to flood her mind. Hajime. He tasted of her dreams. Tobacco and Hajime. The memories came swiftly, solidifying and strengthening until she knew for sure. She leaned forward, pulling him closer. The world had never understood him, but she did. He was her mate.

>>

>> He slowly pulled away from her. Fumi's cheeks were flushed. She'll never change. "Remember now?" he asked, rubbing his thumb across her lower lip, just as he always did, as if to gentle, to comfort. As he always didâ€¦

>>

>> "Dammit, that can't be real! This can't be happening! You... You." She was shaken to the core. She didn't, couldn't believe it.

>>

>> "Fumi. I didn't think so, either. I thought it was stupid. How could I be obsessed with a woman from my dreams? She wasn't real, couldn't be real. But I was. Every other woman was measured against her. Every time, they were lacking. I didn't even remember all of the dreams, all of the images, but it wasn't enough for me to see that I didn't want them. Not really. None of them were Tokio. None of them were youâ€¦ I thought I was crazy. Until I saw you standing there...."

>>

>> "I... I don't understand. This can't- I can't- I have to." She could feel her heart beating, hear it thumping frantically. No. She was not going to fall for this. It was too crazy.

>>

>> Rei saw the look in Fumi's eyes. He knew what that glint meant. The conversation was just about to end. He had to make her see. How could he? He reached for her hand, gently holding it. "I never really believed in much in my life, Fumi. I'm a cynical bastard. In more ways than I really want you to know, but I'm not going to pretend I'm not. I used every means I could to work my way to the top. And I have, Fumi. That's me. But in the dreams, in life.... As soon as I saw you, you gave me peace. I never had that before in this lifetime. Please. I don't say it often, but.... please don't walk away."

>>

>> _Please don't go. I need you_. A dream, half forgotten from her childhood. Warmth and love and need. She sighed and sat down. It was real. She knew it in her heart. And her heart was his.

>>

>> *****

>>

>> Nami leaned against the wall, looking at her watch. She was hoping to catch Rei coming in, but he had not arrived back at the hotel yet. She wanted to rage against him. He did not care about her, really. This trip to Tokyo basically proved it. All their conversations were stilted. Strained on her side and cold on his. No matter how much she pushed, he was not hers and would never be.

>>

>> She had called, but there was no answer in his room. She sighed and closed her eyes. _No promises. Damn him. Well, a girl knows when to walk away. And this girl is going to walk away now._ She called again, this time to leave a message. It was time to say good-bye. She wasn't going to waste anymore of her life waiting for him.

>>

>> She was resigned as she walked out of the hotel lobby. She did not notice the shadow following her until it was much too late.

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14. the
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